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Gender & Society in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Georgia

*Institute for Policy Studies, Tbilisi
2004*

Acknowledgements

This report was written between December 2004 and February 2005. The research has been conducted as a part of a project run by the UNDP Country Office in Georgia: "Women's Regional Centre in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Georgia", within the framework of Samtskhe-Javakheti Integrated Development Programme and the Women's Regional Centre. The respective sub-project: "Gender Related Research and Analysis in the Region of Samtskhe-Javakheti" included collecting and analysing the gender related data and statistics and defining the gender related needs in the districts of Akhaltsikhe, Adigeni, Akhalkalaki, Aspindza, Borjomi and Ninotsminda and direct its activities towards the achievement of gender equality.

This report is intended to encourage discussion about gender-related policy in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Georgia as a whole, rather than to provide definite solutions. We are thankful to UNDP for the open-minded and encouraging attitude shown during the preparation of this report. Nino Lagvilava, Beka Mikautadze, and Natia Cherkezishvili, UNDP officers responsible for the project, have created highly supportive and stimulating working environment. In general, the only external limitations to the work were those caused by the difficulties in obtaining comprehensive and reliable information.

In the course of the preparation of the document the authors were assisted by a number of other agencies that we would like to thank – UNICEF, State Department of Statistics, National Centre of Disease Control and Medical Statistics, as well as various other state agencies and international organizations operating in the region, particularly the regional and district governments, the regional police department, Horizonti Foundation, World Vision International, CARE – who have helped us with useful information and advice. Special gratitude is due to experts and officials who have provided important and inspiring feedback, information and advice on the issues of gender in Samtskhe-Javakheti – Gia Shervashidze, Nana Berekashvili, Lela Khomeriki, Marina Gikoshvili, Leila Gelashvili, Nugzar Maisuradze, Khatuna Kapanadze, Maia Partskalashvili and many others.

In addition, the authors would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by our colleagues at the Institute for Policy Studies – their overall support is greatly appreciated, and we would like to wholeheartedly thank several our friends and colleagues for their important contribution to the work and moral support – Anna Kitiashvili, Ekaterina Pirtskhalava, and Erekle Kereselidze, and Tina Eristavi; and equally thank our interviewers – Salome Jandieri, Nunu Latsabidze, Omar Saganelidze, Ani Natroshvili, Zezva Patashuri, Maia Baramidze, Tali Gozalishvili, Maia Tatalashvili, Elza Janiashvili, Dali Agdgomeladze, Lela Kokaia, Mari Natroshvili, and Narine Ginosian, who have worked with dedication and responsibility in difficult field conditions.

We have been assisted in the organization of the study by Narine Ginosian, Guliko Bekauri, Nino Khachidze, Marina Gachechiladze, also by headmasters and the staff of the following schools (Adigeni school, Akhalkalaki school N 1, Akhaltsikhe school N 5, , Aspindza school, Borjomi school N 1, Ninotsminda school No1).

Many ideas and facts presented here have been borrowed from a number of sources. We have tried to fully acknowledge these sources in footnotes and in the list of references, and we apologise for possible omissions. Naturally, some of the viewpoints presented here are debatable or need further argumentation. However, solely the authors are responsible for the views presented in the report, which do not necessarily reflect an official position of UNDP.

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● INTRODUCTION:

i. The Concept of Gender in Development

The issue of gender is of universal significance, and is attracting increasing attention worldwide. It is multifaceted and complex, and understanding this complexity requires a holistic approach. Men and women, both, participate in nearly every aspect of life in communities throughout the world. Not surprisingly, then, the rules that regulate the behaviours and values of men and women in a given society - that is, its gender system - have the potential to impact nearly every aspect of life. Contrary to seeing sex to be a phenomenon of purely biological nature, the concept of gender refers to the common interpretation of tasks, functions and roles attributed to men and women in a society, both in public and in private life - to what a given society believes about the appropriate roles, responsibilities, privileges, relations and activities of men and women, and the behaviours that result from these beliefs. Culturally and socially constructed gender roles and related norms are both shaped and reproduced through activities of men and women, girls and boys, and through conforming to their expectations.

Like many other group identities, gender gives rise to inequalities and discriminations. However, when speaking about the gender, only too often the focus is on women and their inequality, while unjustifiably ignoring the impact of gender policies on males, although there is no doubt that generally subordinate position of women is a sad reality. In fact gender studies should be equally applicable to both men and women, aiming to look at all the issues from the gender perspective, to identify the topics, which have priority for the improvement of human conditions, and to better integrate gender differences into policies. Many governments, however, have left the subject of women's equal rights to education, healthcare, legal status, political representation and fair pay to pine at the bottom of their list of priorities.

The struggle for the equality of genders is still focused around the feminism, which historically can be characterized as developing through the three stages: 1. The first wave feminism, dating from the mid of 19th century until 1920s, focused on women's rights and centred around securing legal change, struggle for the vote, for access to education and professions, to have equal legal rights in property ownership, in marriage and divorce. 2. The second wave feminism concentrated more on private sphere. It dated from the 1960 until 1990s. Gender differences were perceived as constructed, so that women's chief battle was against ideological positioning of women. Family, abortion, sexuality, gender inequality in labour, rape and domestic violence became the key issues. 3. The subsequent - third wave - feminism claims that popular culture can be the site of activism, it has a more global perspective, looking at the material conditions of people's lives. Being part of the third wave feminism means realizing one's own politics through the mass media and popular culture. The shift of issues between the second and the third wave feminism is not so sharp as distinguishing between the first and the second waves, the problems to be tackled by the third wave feminists remaining mainly the same. The area of gender studies remains: the gender differences and inequalities in private and public life, i.e. how gender shapes the lives, obligations, responsibilities, and activities of people.

Whatever the conceptual background for gender-based research, respective policy analysis of the situation rests as a rule on the underlying sex differences in the needs of the people. Specifically researchers and practitioners focus on the existence of such differences based both on nature and the social construction of gender, or in other words the cultural context that shapes gender specific practices. It also comes out that promoting women's rights is not simply right from moral viewpoint, it is also important for development. Growth and living standards get a dramatic boost when women are given more education, political participation, and economic opportunity.

Looking at the situation from the gender perspective invariably arises the question of equality. As noted above, at the beginning of the feminist movement the main concern was the formal equality of rights, but after achieving this aim in the majority of Western societies, the question emerged about essence of gender equality, defined not as a state or condition of being the same, especially in terms of social status or legal/political rights. So,

what does equality mean? - equality of opportunities or of outcomes? Does equality mean that women should take masculine norms, values and lifestyles? - which may be achieved through gender neutrality or androgyny. This would mean that the goal of equality is to be achieved through the assimilation of women to the values, institutions and life-styles of the historically dominant group (men).

Besides pointing to the doubtful attractiveness of many masculine characteristics, indeed the equality on the basis of sameness would move women into male-oriented structures that assume male experiences and norms at their core. Modern feminism emphasizes distinctions between men and women, implying difference in perspective, which insists on the recognition of and valuing of the ways in which women are different from men. It is vital for women to value difference between genders rather than attempt to homogenize experience to fit predetermined model. Difference can become a resource.

According to a widespread opinion, men favour individual self and personal achievement, - hence autonomy and separation are orienting values; while for women, morality is focused on care, responsibility for others. Women view self and others as interdependent, and the relationships with these others are seen as central to life. Accordingly, the Role Theory ascribes to males the instrumental and to females the nurturant roles in the family life, while the "Social Relationships Framework" sees the gender division of labour as a form of a social connection, making it essential for women and men to engage in relationships of cooperation and exchange. So, the issue is that if the life conditions provide opportunities for men and women to satisfy their different, sex-specific needs, these needs should be articulated and heard, rather than achieving merely some conditions of formal equality between the sexes.

Making slightly more than a half of the world's population, women account for two thirds of the 1.2 billion people currently living in extreme poverty. Almost two thirds of the world's illiterate people are women. Women hold less than 13 per cent of the world's parliamentary seats, and less than 9 per cent of seats in the least developed countries¹. Women account for a half of the 40 million people currently infected with HIV. Globally, between 16-50 per cent of women in a steady relationship have been physically assaulted by their partners. Every year, more than half a million women die from complications in pregnancy or childbirth, while almost all of them would still be alive if they had access to a skilled midwife or doctor in childbirth and effective emergency obstetric care. Ninety-nine per cent of these deaths occur in developing countries. Having more educated women with greater rights could make the single biggest positive difference to reducing poverty, the rate of childhood diseases and death and the spread of AIDS in developing countries, however this process is slow.

If for previously women's rights were considered too controversial for mainstream policy, while international development agencies dodged gender issues, the last three decades have seen considerable increase in the attention of the international community to the issues of gender. On 18 December 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It entered into force as an international treaty two years later, on 3 September 1981 after the twentieth country had ratified it (Georgia signed and ratified it in 1994 without reservations). The Convention was the culmination of more than thirty years of work by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, a body established in 1946 to monitor the situation of women and to promote women's rights. The three world conferences of the UN Decade for Women - held in 1975 (Mexico City), 1980 (Copenhagen), and 1985 (Nairobi) - were other important mobilizing and awareness-raising events, resulting in a consensus document, "Nairobi Forward -Looking Strategies for the advancement of Women to the Year 2000", containing a comprehensive set of strategies for advancing the status of women worldwide. Ten years later, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in 1995 in Beijing, China, to evaluate the achievements to date and plan the way forward. The resulting Beijing Platform for Action was a strong statement signed by the majority of governments in the world, and it serves as an impetus for government action and a monitoring tool for NGOs to follow the extent to which their governments were

¹ By now, only a dozen of countries had achieved the target of having 30 per cent of their parliamentary seats filled by women. (Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, Iceland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Costa Rica, Argentina and Mozambique.) DFID Fact Book, 2004

following through on their national commitments. Finally, a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action taking place at the 49th session of the UN General Assembly in March 2005.

In September 2000, 189 nations ratified the *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, affirming the right of every human being to development and laying out a path toward freedom for every woman, man, and child. To ensure that progress towards this end be measurable, representatives of UN agencies and other international organizations defined a set of goals, targets, and indicators for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. These measures, collectively known as the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs), have become a prime focus of development work throughout the globe, and a yardstick by which they measure achievements or failures.

The MDGs explicitly acknowledge that gender can have a major impact on development, helping to promote it in some cases while seriously retarding it in others. Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women - is, in fact, specifically about gender. The gender MDG specifically focuses on girls' education, addressing gender inequalities is a crucial ingredient for achieving all of the MDGs. At the same time, the four areas being measured for the gender equality MDG are: the ratio of boys to girls to be found in all levels of schooling; the ratio of females and males who can read and write; the proportion of seats being held by women in national parliaments; and the number of women earning a formal wage in the non-agricultural sector of the economy.

Talking about the gender problems, mostly the decrease of gender inequalities is assumed, although gender-related crime and abuse is still a widespread problem. Obviously, it is important to define as to what kind of inequality one should act against, as from the policy viewpoint it is important to distinguish between typologically different cases. So, inequality may be in a *de-facto* situation, i.e. of statistical nature (e.g. different actual involvement of men and women in politics due to say less disposition of women), or in institutionalised opportunities/discriminations leading to inequalities (e.g. so called "glass ceiling"²); or, in other words whether the women, considering politics again, have unequal opportunity with men (either by law or due to social taboos) to be involved in political life. And if women and men do not have such an equal opportunity, the question arises how it can be achieved. Commonly, significantly lower involvement of women can be due to the lack of desire or interest, but it can be argued the reasons of the lack of motivation may be deficiencies in education, domestic overload or psychological inhibitions (psycho-cultural fallout of history of male domination) caused by some other inequalities that need to be addressed. Rooting out institutionalised differences in opportunities should be the first target of any anti-discrimination policy, while *de-facto* inequality is often more difficult to eradicate and may require more refined instruments, such as often controversial "affirmative action"³.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to diagnose correctly the gender-related maladies of a society, reveal factors and roots of existing inequalities and their dynamic. Inequalities and differences are often based on and correlated with class, sexuality, ethnicity, age, dis/ability, nationality, religion, and citizenship status. A student of gender should pay special attention to such issues as regional and cultural specificities defining existing in the local inequality profile (tradition, isolation, poverty, etc.); changes in general socio-economic setting, mobility, employment situation and external demand for changing economic role of women; media and information flows as related to gender issues; government, international actors and CBOs as factors of change; and, of course, feminism and other ideological developments having direct influence on the public debate and public attitudes around gender.

Over the past decades, it became evident that gender-balanced policies are critical to economic development, active civil society, and good governance, especially in transitional societies. Focusing on gender-balanced approach is a decisive factor in attempts to reduce

² The "glass ceiling" analogy describes the alleged condition keeping women from achieving any but token positions at the high echelons of corporate business and governance: because glass is clear, those existing under such a ceiling might not even notice that a barrier separating them from higher levels is in place; yet, if they tried to pass through, the ceiling would prevent any such rise.

³ Initially "affirmative action" meant seeking equality under the law. Gradually its meaning shifted to a desire for equality of opportunity, coming to mean actions aiming at equality of results regardless of the objective reasons for any disparities.

poverty and child mortality, improve health and education, build robust civil society and encourage grassroots democracy. Any sustainable and effective social policy should take this basic fact into account.

ii. Situational Context of Georgia and Samtskhe-Javakheti

During the past decade and a half the Georgian society underwent drastic changes. The dissolution of Soviet Union in 1990-1991, and the subsequent establishment of independence in Georgia got strongly linked to the population's expectations of democratic development, prosperity and inclusion into global processes. However, the early transition resulted in political instability leading to bloody ethno-territorial and civil wars, economic standstill, mass unemployment and impoverishment of population. Weakness of the state, mismanagement and lack of strategic thinking resulted in demolishing of the social security system and led to mass impoverishment. Georgia has experienced a difficult socio-economic transition toward a market-based economy. Output declined dramatically, inflation was rampant for much of the first decade, and virtually all of, though unproductive and overstaffed, industrial enterprises have been forced to close. This dramatic economic decline and restructuring has led to alarming demographic developments, increased unemployment and the development of an unregulated market for informal labour; GDP has fallen, absolute poverty has increased many-fold and wages have plummeted. Mortality rates have increased sharply while fertility rates have dropped. High mortality (particularly among men), declining birth rates, and massive emigration have fuelled a decrease in total population from 5.4 million in 1989 to 4.7 million in 2004; According to the WHO data, adult mortality for males two and a half times exceeds that for females (207/86); Especially affected was the health of the male population. Average life expectancy at birth for men has accordingly declined (although the trend has seemingly reversed recently), estimated in 2002 as 69.4, as compared to the female life expectancy at birth of 77.5.⁴

Notwithstanding some positive developments, the country is still far from full recovery. During the last years the social stratification became more visible, partly due to increasing income gap between the new poor (as more than a half of the population is considered to live below the poverty line), and the thin layer of the new rich who has either used available financial and social resources to accumulate capital mainly through often dubious and unlawful advantages in privatisation and trade, or acquired wealth through corruption and abuse of office. The key economic change is linked to the restructuring of political and economic system from Soviet centralized type to (embryonic and to great extend wild) free market. Much of the new capital concentrates in the cities, while most of rural areas experience full economic stagnation, increasing another gap - between rural and urban population, giving rise to growing migration to the capital city and other bigger urban centres, but also to emigration to other countries.

Extensive socio-economic transformation experienced by Georgia over the last fifteen years has substantially affected not only the structure of economy and living standards of the population, but also the prevailing role and the meaning of gender in the society. State-imposed, often only formal, gender equality disappeared along with the Soviet empire. Collapse of the old system has to a considerable degree affected families and gender relations, and it has affected men and women differently. Gender misbalance has worsened, as well changes brought to disadvantage some of the age groups, - children, adolescents and old people are in especially difficult condition. Gender inequality in a number of areas is a problem, but its profile is specific, and it is not fully recognized by the population as its forms are more subtle and difficult to reveal than in many other societies.

The evidence suggests that, while the consequences of market reform have not been gender-neutral, their magnitude and direction for men and women, and hence for gender differentials, have varied considerably across the country. Women's post-Soviet experience in the labour force also reveals many worrying trends. So, it has been observed that the transition to market economy has brought women under-representation in decision-making

⁴ Human Development Report, 2003. Country data for Georgia http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/cty/cty_f_GEO.html. However, the CIA estimates for 2004 look more optimistic: *male* - 72.35 years; *female* - 79.44 (*cnf.* CIA World Factbook, 2004), while WHO would suggest 68.4 and 75.0 respectively <http://www.who.int/countries/geo/en/>

positions, high rates of unemployment, and in some cases a re-emergence of traditional stereotypes concerning gender roles. As the process continues, the reforms are likely to affect men and women differently because of their different roles, responsibilities and capacities in society and the economy.

As already noted, Georgia is not plagued by the most odious varieties of gender inequalities still existing in some other societies; nevertheless existing inequalities are quite numerous. Georgia was long committed, at least nominally, to gender equality. Women continue to graduate from secondary schools and universities at rates equal to, or exceeding, the rates for men. Basically, gender equality is guaranteed by law, and if the balance is sometimes violated, it favours rather women than men – in such areas as earlier retirement age, maternity leave, parental rights or obligatory military service, with only some restrictions regarding professional occupation (in particularly dangerous, harmful or physically demanding professions).

Criminal sanctions exist for the commission of human rights violations, including sex discrimination. The Labour Code specifically prohibits discrimination against women who are pregnant or have infants, and against single mothers with children under the age of 14. It also forbids the dismissal of pregnant women, women with children under the age of three, and single mothers with children under the age of 14. If a woman's employment contract expires under such circumstances, the employer must provide her with a job for the relevant period. The law imposes sanctions for violations, including fines and imprisonment.

Samtskhe-Javakheti does not differ from the rest of the country from the viewpoint of the main social problems - here, like elsewhere, it is poverty, and one of the leading reasons for it is unemployment. However, there are other factors at play that are more specific, such as ethnic profile of the population and the geographic isolation from other parts of Georgia.

The traditions, customs and attitudinal stereotypes determine and perpetuate gender inequality in many areas, giving men more economic leverages, more opportunities for career advancement, and most importantly, much greater say and privilege in family and community life. Such inequality is not uncommon in other regions of the world and to some degree exists everywhere, both in developed and developing worlds, among representatives of all religions and ethnicities, although varying in scope. Even within Samtskhe-Javakheti, there are significant local differences – generally speaking, rural setting, geographic isolation and mountainous terrain are characterised by more conservative lifestyle and stronger gender stereotypes, while population mobility, opportunities for education, and access to information mitigate these.

Girls' participation in education and workforce was always high in Georgia. Pre-transition government policies such as generous maternity leaves and extensive child care provision, encouraged women to work. Relatively high minimum wages, very centralized wage bargaining, and the highly regulated, almost exclusively public, labour market helped to keep wage differentials at a minimum. However, over the last decade privatisation and deregulation, coupled with worsening economic conditions and increasing poverty, have resulted in a shift away from primary public employment into a less formal private labour market. The growth of the informal labour market would have shifted the structure of female employment out of formal sector jobs. Empirical evidence suggests that a larger proportion of women have been employed in the secondary, informal market.

Economic transition, price and trade liberalisation and the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, although slow, have brought about a radical change in the characteristics of the labour market. A broader mix of more flexible employment opportunities and a growing proportion of informal employment have replaced full-time employment in an exclusively formal labour market, in which the state was the primary employer. Still, in a context in which formal employment is nearly exclusively public, pays very low wages and often does not pay at all, informal employment in the private market may offer better income opportunities and, as the public sector shrinks, more secure employment. In particular, within the private informal labour market it is important to distinguish between 'employers' who employ regular or permanent workers and 'own account' workers who may or may not be assisted by temporary employees and/or family members. In the highly deregulated private market for labour that is emerging from the transition, these two categories have very different characteristics in terms of income security (or lack of it) and working conditions. Those in the first category may have high security and high income, while being

an own-account worker is often associated with substantial job insecurity and lack of protection.

Therefore, women's experience in the labour market differs significantly from that of men's. Gender based segregation by sector and level of responsibility is pronounced. Women tend to be concentrated in a few, primarily low-wage sectors, including healthcare, trade, public catering, education, and agriculture, as well as in the informal sector. Men constitute the majority employed in transport, construction, financing, information technology services, and manufacturing. Wage arrears are most common in industries with higher relative participation of women, including healthcare and education.

In the first years after independence, devoid of work and their traditional role of breadwinners, men found themselves out of place in a society and in a family. Unlike more flexible and active women, men at large did not always succeed in adjusting to new economic realities, they did not seek opportunities to open own business or find jobs outside their professional field. The base of their authority in a certain degree became eroded, and frequently even re-establishing in subsequent period economic role in the family would not fully return their full dominance in family-related decisions. Indeed, confronted with the urgency of finding the means for feeding the family, women proved to be more flexible than their spouses, showed more readiness to "downgrade".

The transition has imposed heavy costs on men. The dramatic dive in male life expectancy gives the most well known expression of these costs. However, of importance is also the tendency for boys to drop out of secondary education, in order to contribute to the household economy. Another effect of economic crisis and unemployment is high male migration from Samtskhe-Javakheti, which sometimes results in divorce, but more often creates a special format of family life without men, although sending in remittances. This is an additional burden for women who have to combine with their traditional tasks other duties that previously belonged to men. One more important impact of such migration is that children are developing without fathers, and particularly boys are deprived of a traditional role model provide by own example - courage, strong will, risk-taking or manual skills.

As frequent male unemployment has contributed to their frequent migration, it led to the increase in the number of female-headed households. Also, it has changed the power structure and bargaining power within the household with working women and – in combination with more stable employment in the traditionally "feminised" sectors – has introduced what was an unknown phenomenon a decade ago: women as prime earners. In addition, the last decade has brought about substantial changes in the pattern of family formation, with a sharp decline in marriage rates. For many families women's earnings are increasingly essential for lifting, and keeping, households out of poverty. It is not yet clear to what extent these new identities of women as household heads and/or sole earners will overcome the labour market disadvantage associated with the perception of women as secondary earners and therefore less committed workforce.

The difficult circumstances of the post-Soviet transition period have affected women's rights with respect to health, physical security, and economic opportunity. Women's health has suffered under harsh economic conditions, and medical services, particularly for pregnant women, are often inadequate. The prohibitive cost of contraceptives and a lack of knowledge about family planning results in a high rate of abortion. High rates of infant mortality, maternal mortality, miscarriages, and sexually transmitted diseases also reflect unsatisfactory reproductive and sexual health care.

In general, the gender implications of transition across all the regions of Georgia remain a largely unexplored subject to date, and Samtskhe-Javakheti is among the least studied from this viewpoint. There does not exist any comprehensive description of how the general socio-economic changes are reflected in the lives of women and men; how well emerging gender-specific needs are satisfied and what are the existing and developing norms. The magnitude of the changes undertaken across the region and their potential effects on the prevailing gender order means that gender issues cannot to be ignored, because, as already noted, they have significant effects on economic growth and poverty. Even strictly economic considerations call for both stronger gender analysis and for mainstreaming gender into countries' public expenditure and budget analysis, as well as in poverty assessments and donors' country assistance strategies.

iii. APPROACH

Many of the cross-cutting problems characteristic for Samtskhe-Javakheti are either generic, caused by political and economic weakness of the Georgian state, and can be found anywhere in Georgia, however, others are specific and stem from the concrete reality of the region, including in the first place such issues as isolation, ethno-linguistic structure, and geography. The multilateral issue of Samtskhe-Javakheti development can not be surmounted unless sustainable economic development and democracy is ensured in the country as a whole, based on deepening of governance-related, legal, social, economic and institutional reform. At the same time there is an urgent need, at a basic level, to capture and analyse economic environment, status of implementation of reforms, social conditions of the population, as well as inter-sectoral issues and systemic problems of governance in the region – all of these creating the socio-political context in which gender-related issues need to be considered.

The goal of our study was to collect and analyse the gender related data and statistics, describe the existing situation in the region through gender perspective, and point to the major institutional and social factors. The research team aimed to gain the understanding in the perception of gender-related roles and respective practices, estimate the level of participation/exclusion of women in social and political life, and identify the role of civil society in dealing with gender issues. Finally, it was crucial to define the gender related needs and problems in the region in a policy relevant way, by providing evidence of the importance of the interaction of various forces—such as culture, society, economics, politics, and law—for the design, implementation, and outcome of reform programs in the area of gender.

There are many reasons why gender inequalities that are not based on innate sex differences or on free choice - are matters of concern. Such inequalities are morally dubious, socially retrograde and economically inefficient. The main purpose of this study is to help put gender on the map of policy making both in the region and in the capital, by raising awareness of the gender implications of the socio-economic transformation undertaken over the last decade. Although it was not possible to obtain data on all of our areas of interest as listed below, those areas that are closely related to our subject include:

Demographic data and family dynamics, including male / female ratio disaggregated by age and related male-female gap in life expectancy gap between males and females (also, life expectancy of persons with disabilities; number of persons above 65), number and age structure of marriages and divorces including interethnic marriages/divorces; average age at first marriage, percent of out-of-wedlock births, average age of parents at first birth; percentage of female-headed households;...

Morbidity, mortality and reproductive health: infant mortality (also under 5 mortality), abortions and abortion ratio (number of abortions per births), maternal mortality, pregnant women receiving pregnancy consultations, births attended by trained personnel, number of midwives and nurses of maternal and child health, percentage of low birth weight births; morbidity structure by gender, fertility, number of cases of sexually-transmitted diseases, access to quality medical services; ...

Economic status, employment and career: employment statistics and unemployment rates, unemployment structure by gender and the share of women in total employment, gender structure of economic activity rates; accessibility of resources (land, house, livestock, other assets), as well as inheritance practices - of land, house, livestock, jewellery, money – with regards to wife and daughter, the fate of dowry in case of divorce; average per-capita income and salaries, gender-related wage gap, shift to informal sector and vertical career differences by gender; gender-specific activities and occupational restrictions, number of persons in administrative and leading positions (e.g. evidence of gender disparities in access to some parts of the labour market with women highly concentrated in semi-skilled positions and underrepresented in senior positions), of specialists and technical workers, and skills (computer literacy, Internet access); Poverty statistics by gender and by the household structure (number of children and dependents); ...

Education: Gender structure and the level of education of adults and children; proportion and gender structure of persons in the spheres of basic, secondary and high education,

gender-related disparities - ratio of girls' enrolment rates to boys in primary, secondary and university education; correlation between poverty and education; parents' preferences to providing education to boys/girls; curriculum on gender; ...

Domestic duties and decision-making: time allocated for domestic chores and the structure of duties by gender, division/sharing of labour; what decisions are made by men and by women (in such areas as birth control, children's education, marriage, expenditures, family assets, purchase, etc), how much jointly the decisions are made in a family; gender roles in nuclear and extended families; frequency and profile of domestic conflicts; freedom of movement (locally or e.g. emigration), to work outside home, to dispose own income, to marry or divorce (prevalence of marriage arrangement), to choose a profession, and sexual freedom (by age and gender)

Gender-related crime and delinquency: criminal statistics by gender (perpetrators and victims), trafficking in human beings, domestic violence, rape and other sexual offence, prostitution, drug addiction, factors of gender based conflicts or violence; frequency of addressing police, litigation;...

Social norms: gender-related norms and customs regulating roles and behaviour in family and community, etiquette, sexual and social behaviour, risk-taking; mechanisms or social regulation; social taboos and exclusion; gender dimension of social capital;...

Governance, policies and civil society: Gender-centred civil society organisations; feminist and other social movements with gender component; political and public participation of men and women, activism and leadership; public debate, accessibility of information and information channels on gender-related issues; major actors and stakeholders, and prevailing approaches in the area of gender-related policies; gender in military service and other civil duties, in pension and social benefits, parental rights; gender-related legislation, its implementation, monitoring and feedback mechanisms; representation of women in the higher echelons of the government, political parties and businesses ...

The report discusses many of these variables that have implications for gender, describing the differential effects of the economic and social shifts on men and women and the factors behind these differences. This assessment is intended to help provide the base for the development of an action plan on gender in the region. The focus is on equality as equality of opportunities.

The profile of recent gender dynamics in Samtskhe-Javakheti is based on a variety of quantitative and qualitative data. Indeed, one of the most critical needs in the region (as well as for the whole country) is for reliable and easily accessible gender statistics. While sex disaggregated data on basic indicators can to some extent be derived from last 2002 census and household surveys, availability and the quality of other information is far from satisfactory.

The structure of the report reflects the areas that we have focused on. Economic realities and their dynamic for the single most important factor of change in gender relations and norms. We consider both the economic context in which gender relations exist, and the gender dimension of these, including the differences in employment, income generation, or property rights.

Education is the key factor in modernising a society, and respectively changing the gender stereotypes. The younger generation is more susceptible to respective change, therefore school education represents a window of opportunity for modernising a society. Respectively, we expect that the formal education is a key factor of positive change in gender relations, and gender dimension of this sphere requires special attention.

Healthcare is a key factor of well-being, and should be adjusted to different health needs of men and women. While it is evident that higher raise in mortality and morbidity rate for men indicate the increased stressogenic factors having stronger influence on males. Still, the role of the diminished access to quality health services is great. The disturbingly high figures of maternal mortality and the limited resources for meeting specific healthcare needs of women is also of great concern.

Still, it is the family life where gender relations find their utmost realisation, and where basic gender-related stereotypes are formed. The two most important aspects of family life from the gender perspective are the different duties and responsibilities of men and women

in a household, often putting women under a double burden of income-generation plus overwhelming responsibility for domestic chores; and the power hierarchy within a family, finding its expression in the structure of decision-making and the different profiles of individual independence and restrictive norms again disfavours women.

Gender-related violence is one more important area deserving special attention. The region of Samtskhe-Javakheti is known for relatively better criminal situation as compared to other regions of Georgia (only Borjomi district is closer to the general pattern), and showing particularly low gender-related crime or women involved in criminal activities. We expect that even with more gender equity in other areas the statistics for crime and violence perpetrated by women will remain low in medium term due to specific social conditions and cultural traditions. On the other hand, the picture of widespread domestic violence, to great extent underreported today, is a matter of grave concern.

Public participation, civic engagement and community activism as an arena of gender differences is one more important area considered in the report. Civic engagement is the participation of private actors in the public sphere, it can be indirect – i.e. through exercising central democratic prerogative of electing officials or being elected through the voting process, as well as direct – which is our main focus, through various ways of expressing opinion, or conducted through interactions of civil society organizations and citizens-at-large with governments to influence decision making or pursue common goals. Gender differences are still very strong in this area, with striking distinctness of Akhaltsikhe, and to less extent Borjomi, where the situation is more balanced.

iv. FIELD WORK

Some of these issues considered in the report are studied by a number of different instruments, in other cases by only one approach, and still other issues are brought here just to keep on mind for future research, as the current framework of the project and existing data were insufficient for making any definite conclusions.

The first goal of our study was to gather basic qualitative and quantitative information on the situation of gender differentiation in Samtskhe-Javakheti. We have attempted to document gender segregation in public and private lives, focusing first of all on the patterns of urbanisation, age characteristics, the existing cultures of two dominant ethnic groups residing in the region, as well as attempted to identify other factors affecting this area.

The basic statistical data have been collected from the State Department of Statistics (SDS). However in many cases information provided by SDS was either incomplete and not reliable, or not disaggregated as needed. Hence there was a need to identify other sources of professional information, such as various agencies and ministries, as well as international organizations working in the area: e.g. in the health area it was the National Centre for Disease Control and Medical Statistics, Ministries of Education and of Health, UNICEF, etc.

Unfortunately there exists a relatively little number of analytical publications or unpublished reports devoted to the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti. During our previous work on the region we have amassed the majority of these that were now reconsidered from the viewpoint of the project needs. Existing literature on related issues have been reviewed and used for designing the work plan and the set of indicators and variables for the field research.

The key component of our study was the field work, which included four types of research activities: survey of the public opinion; in-depth interviews with representatives of regional administration, representatives of the civil society and experts; focus group sessions with pedagogical personnel of secondary schools in the region; and writing essays by the eight-graders with subsequent application of content analysis to the texts. While the latter three instruments provided essentially qualitative information, the survey granted the research team an opportunity to gather certain quantifiable information. The essential part of the preparatory work was making detailed plans for the field work as well as designing the tools for the field work, defining the sample, recruiting and training interviewers.

The survey was carried out in September 2-18, 2004 in all six regions of Samtskhe Javakheti. It was based on specially designed questionnaire that contained both standard sociological instruments and the questions designed by the research team best reflecting

the interest of the study. The sample was chosen according to the distribution of males and females in the districts of Samtskhe-Javakheti. The distribution of population in urban/rural settlement type, as well as among age groups were also taken into consideration. Interviews were taken mostly by local interviewers (partly members of the UNDP-sponsored Women's Regional Centre in Akhaltsikhe) that underwent special training in advance. During the survey, the interviewers visited every fourth house in each settlement, while in each place two focal points were given to the interviewers for the beginning of the survey. Summarily, 700 persons in the age range of 18 to 78 were surveyed, 49.1% male and 50.9% female, 18.4% in the age range of 18-24, 57.8% in the age range of 25-49 and 23.8% 50 years and older.

In order to understand and interpret basic trends in gender-related developments in the region, a number of in-depth interviews were taken from decision-makers, as well as from competent experts and practitioners in all six regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti⁵. We have gathered official, whenever available - gender segregated, statistical data on employment, economic activity, participation, education, health, crime, etc.

One school in each district, - Georgian or Armenian - was chosen for writing essays by the 8-th grade schoolchildren about how they see their future in 10 years, implicitly revealing their interpretation of gender roles. After the completion of the essays (written in Armenian in Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki, with subsequent translation into Georgian), they were studied using the method of content analysis. Focus-group sessions comprising of eight to fifteen persons have been conducted in each district of the region involving teachers at schools where essays were written by students, hold in a manner that the session could proceed in friendly and stimulating atmosphere, where everyone could express their opinion on a few focuses of discussion offered by a facilitator. Although these sessions, as well as essays, provided little quantifiable information, they were extremely important for better understanding the general mood in educational institutions, where the change in values and norms are the most important for the future.

⁵ Interviews have been taken from:

1. Women's Regional Centre in Samtskhe-Javakheti (UNDP): Marina Gachechiladze & Beka Mikautadze;
2. Social Welfare Unit, Deputy Head;
3. World Vision Youth Center: Lela Bekauri – Director.
4. UNDP Local Office: Programme officers Bidzina Maisuradze and Zura Petriashvili;
5. Akhaltsikhe Business Center (ABC): Trainers Khatuna Kapanadze and Maia Partsakhashvili
6. Regional Police Department: Vano Tsiklauri – Deputy Head, and Vakhtang Getsadze - Head of Investigations Department
7. CARE: Programme officers Tamuna Kapanadze and Zurab Ivanidze.
8. Statistical Department: Nugzar Maisuradze – Head.
9. Akhaltsikhe District Gamgeoba: Shalva Dalalishvili, Deputy Gamgebeli.
10. Regional Department of Health: Leila Gelashvili – Head;
11. Department of Education: Marina Gikoshvili-Bekishvili.
12. Taxation Department: David Jinchveladze - Deputy Head

1. Geography and History

Samtskhe-Javakheti region consists of an area of 6,413 square kilometres, which makes about 11% of Georgia's territory, and has a total population of almost 207,600, forming 4.7% of country's population. This is a historical region of Georgia, which is characterised by a number of specific difficulties exacerbating the general political and socio-economic problems of Georgia. It is located in the Southern part of Georgia, in the Mtkvari river basin, and consists of 6 districts - with regional capital in Akhaltsikhe. The six districts comprising the region are very different from one another even as they represent many problems endemic for the whole country. Samtskhe-Javakheti province is among the most ethnically non-homogeneous regions of Georgia, and some of current problems stem from this diversity. Integrating the two major ethnic groups – Armenians and Georgians, represents a major political challenge for the region. The ethnic composition is mostly characterized by clear-cut ethnic boundaries between different settlement types and the rarity of mixed ethnic settlements. The only truly mixed district in Samtskhe-Javakheti province is Akhaltsikhe.



Administrative map of Samtskhe-Javakheti

Samtskhe-Javakheti was historically one of the most developed regions of Georgia, and great number of cultural monuments, churches, citadels and *karvasla*-s (or karavan-sarays - ancient inns) situated along the great silk road passing the Mtkvari valley serve as a vocal evidence of the past glory. The region is considered by many historians as a birthplace of the Georgian nation. It is actually a northern segment of the historical territory of Meskhети, the southern part of which belongs currently to Turkey.

The political importance of Meskhети grew starting from the 8th cc., with the decline of Arabian rule, when the region was under Byzantium, and when Bagrationi dynasty ascended to the prominence. In the 10th c. Meskhети (Tao-Klarjeti) was the most powerful of Georgian feudal states, and later in the 11th c., when the country got united under Bagrationis, of Georgia's provinces. However, it should be noted that current Borjomi district was not a part of Samtskhe but instead comprised the historic province of Tori, predominantly a constituent part of the Kartli Kingdom. In the 13th c. Catholicism takes root in the region, as a result of strengthened relations between Queen Rusudan of Georgia and Rome. However, this ended with Jelal ad-Dyn Rumi and then Mongols invading Georgia in the 13th c. Georgia stayed fragmented since, with the exception of being briefly reunited under Giorgi the Brilliant, and in 15th-16th cc. got finally divided into smaller principalities, Samtskhe-Saatabago among the strongest of these. However, after the fall of Constantinople the fate of Samtskhe was doomed, and by the end of the 16th c. it turned into the Childir Vilayet of the Turkish Empire. Significant part of the population was forced to convert to Islam, and until the beginning of the 19th c. the territory was ruled by Muslim Georgian nobility, to certain extent Turkicized. However, in 1828, as a result of the Russian-Turkish war, the citadel of Akhaltsikhe was conquered by the army of General Paskevich, and as a result, significant part of Meskhети (in accordance with the Adrianople Peace Treaty this made 10 out of 24 Sanjaqs - districts - comprising it, which covers the districts of Akhaltsikhe, Adigeni, Aspindza, Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda) became the part of the Russian empire. Significant part of the local Muslim population was pushed out of the

region, and the Russian government brought in exchange the Christian (Gregorian) Armenian population from Eastern Turkey and mainly Anatolia.

With the Russian revolution of 1917 and the Georgian independence declared in May 1918, Samtskhe-Javakheti became again a place of interethnic strife and bloodshed, experiencing the invasion by Turkish army in 1918, and two pro-Turkish rebellions (of 1917 and 1919), putting Muslim and Christians against one another and causing tragic outflows of refugees – predominantly Gregorian Armenians but also Orthodox Georgians, while Catholics experienced less suppression and turmoil. However, reestablishment of the Russian (Soviet) rule in 1921 brought more peace, if not prosperity, to the region. Paradoxically, the Soviet authorities continued to strengthen Turkic and Muslim identity among the respective part of the population, until the Second World War when the attitude changed. In 1944 Stalin ordered the deportation of all Muslims from the region, and about 90,000 people, mostly elderly, women and children, as males were fighting on the German front, were forcibly and with significant casualties resettled to Central Asia. Many of their descendants until today are striving but yet unable to return to Georgia, mainly due to overall resistance to their repatriation both on the part of the authorities and the population (just a few families have returned to Akhaltsikhe, and a few hundred Muslim Meskhatians - Ahiska or Meskhetian Turks, as they are also called - live currently in Tbilisi, Guria and Imereti). The majority of the deportees were from Akhaltsikhe, Aspindza, and Adigeni districts, and about 10% from Akhalkalaki. Instead, people were moved to the region from Western Georgia, mostly from Imereti, Racha and Ajara, and currently they make significant part of the population of the region, which is a complex mixture of Orthodox and Partly Muslim (Ajarians) newcomers from Western Georgia, Gregorian and Catholic Armenians speaking Anatolian Armenian dialect, and old local Christian Meskhetian population, both Orthodox and Catholic.

As a result of the complex and often so tragic history, Samtskhe-Javakheti differs from other parts of Georgia due to the experience of centuries of isolation and multi-ethnic and multi-confessional composition. Later, Soviet rule left other sad trace – Southern part of Georgia along the border with Turkey was defined so called "border zone" with special heightened security regime, which precluded any person from outside the zone to enter it without special permit. At the same time, the economic conditions were artificially maintained slightly better than in other parts of the country. This special "border" regime caused dramatic isolation, not yet overcome, and on one hand brought economic underdevelopment, but on the other kept down criminality and chaos. Due to such experience, the region is more self-sufficient and is less integrated into economic, political and cultural life of other parts of the country. Relatively low criminality in the region is one of positive legacies, related to remaining isolation and certain conservatism; however, more and more young people get involved in delinquent activities such as drug addiction as there is more movement and exchanges. Even the construction of Baku-Ceyhan pipeline and related land payments gave rise to racket and other crime in Akhaltsikhe region. The major problem remains in this relation high unemployment among the youth, few options for self-realisation and personal development, and little opportunity for satisfying leisure activities.

With Georgia's independence, in addition to economic decline, dramatic emergence in interethnic tension was caused by unbalanced nationalist rhetoric of early 1990s, but never led to large-scale violence. Another important event was the Karabakh conflict. Many young Armenians from Akhalkalaki, led by patriotic feelings, have participated in the conflict, and this experience continues to play significant role in forming values and identities, and especially in strengthening anti-Moslem attitudes. The last event causing much dissatisfaction among Akhalkalaki Armenians was dividing of Georgia into 12 administrative regions, so that Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts now belong to Samtskhe-Javakheti region with capital in Akhaltsikhe. Dissatisfaction is caused by mainly two points – the necessity to go to Akhaltsikhe in order to solve administrative issues, and the fact that unlike Javakheti, i.e. Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts, where Armenians form absolute majority of the population and could aspire for autonomy, their relative share in Samtskhe-Javakheti is much more modest. As a result, there is ongoing debate regarding separating the two districts of Javakheti from Samtskhe, i.e. Akhaltsikhe plus the districts of Adigeni, Aspindza and Borjomi. No actual steps have been made in that direction by the government, and there is little probability of this to happen.

The fears of possible instability are mostly related to the expected withdrawal of the base. It is possible that this may lead to increased tensions based on demands of Javakheti

autonomy, or protests to increased military cooperation with Turkey. Not weaponry is sold by the Russian military currently, there is the prospect of much more weapons left after the evacuation of the base - the previous experience shows that when a Russian base is about to close in any region, the sale of old weapons and ammunition increases. In addition, there is also general unwillingness on the part of Armenians of Javakheti to allow strengthening of the presence of Georgian army in the region, and some incidents demonstrating such attitudes have taken place in the past.

Many of the problems in the region stem from the overall weakness and inefficiency of the Georgian government, inconsistency and haphazardness of some of its policies, as well as from the scarce economic resources available in the country, also the problems of local administrations and other institutions, while of course there is a strong interlink between these factors and many common diseases. Such is definitely widely spread corruption, incompetence and the primacy of personal and group interests infesting every level of governance. Another general problem is ineffective legislation in the country, unable as yet to define clearly the prerogatives of local governments, while the status itself of the regions and the regional representative (whose personality has been sometimes a factor of dissatisfaction among many inhabitants, especially in Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki) are rather controversial concepts from the legal perspective.

The region, especially the two Armenian-speaking districts of Javakheti, experience informational, political, communicational and economic isolation from the rest of Georgia. Poor knowledge of the Georgian language among ethnic Armenians, and little willingness to integrate into the Georgian society due to practical difficulties as well as elements of ethnic nationalism, contribute further to isolation, underdevelopment and the risks of instability. Lack of integration with the rest of Georgia not only creates public alienation, weakening of the feeling of citizenship and belonging, as well as security and confidence in future, it has highly adverse impact on civil and economic development of the area. The biggest problem in centre-periphery relations is general mutual mistrust and suspicion, in some cases further reinforced on the part of the population by such factors as informational isolation, Georgian language deficiency, and external manipulation. The lack of public trust in the government institutions is further reinforced by corruption, which is particularly strong and visible on the regional level where the civil society is poorly developed and unable to exercise public control.

Technologic modernisation helps change the situation gradually. Development of autonomous telecommunications systems - cellular phones, or satellite and cable TV, - helps greatly in overcoming informational isolation, serving as a stimulus to cultural exchange and more awareness about neighbouring cultures. While there are special programmes assisting to overcome informational isolation through supporting access to TV broadcasts as well as to Internet, cellular telephone networks develop under market pressures. Becoming a popular means of communication, they may at least partly resolve the problem of communicational deficiency. Equally good prospects have the development of optical cable networks for telephone, TV and Internet connections. Now, great hopes are linked to the fundamental reconstruction of the road to the region via Tsalka, planned to start soon within the framework of the American Millennium Challenge programme. Equally important will be the construction of the planned railway link with Turkey.

2. The Population and Migration Patterns

Data about the demographic structure and population distribution patterns in Samtskhe-Javakheti create important background information, helpful for understanding some of the social problems in the region. Particularly important are the age, settlement type, gender and ethnic data, related to such processes as migration and changes in family structure/size. As mentioned above, the overall population of Samtskhe-Javakheti according to the 2002 census comprises 207,600 persons or 4.7% of the total population of Georgia, with the highest number of inhabitants in Akhalkalaki district, followed by Akhaltsikhe and then Borjomi and Ninotsminda, while Aspindza claims the smallest population.

Table 1. Population by districts (2002)

District	Total	%
Akhaltzikhe	46,134	22.2
Adigeni	20,752	10.0
Aspindza	13,010	6.3
Borjomi	34,422	15.6
Akhalkalaki	60,975	29.4
Ninotsminda	34,305	16.5
Total	207,598	100

Source: 2002 Census data.⁶

There are by 3.2% more females than males in the region as a whole, although the districts differ by male/female gap, - in the four of them the difference varies from 2.6% to 3.4%, but there are two striking exceptions, - Ninotsminda where difference is only 1%, and Borjomi with the difference as high as 6.9%.

Table 2: Population by sex

District	Males	Females	Total	Males %	Females %
Akhaltzikhe	22,271	23,863	46,134	48.3	51.7
Adigeni	10,101	10,651	20,752	48.7	51.3
Aspindza	6,325	6,685	13,010	48.6	51.4
Borjomi	15,074	17,348	34,422	46.5	53.5
Akhalkalaki	29,642	31,333	60,975	48.6	51.4
Ninotsminda	16,987	17,318	34,305	49.5	50.5
Total	100,400	107,198	207,598	48.4	51.6

Source: 2002 Census data.

During the last years, population number in Samtskhe-Javakheti, as elsewhere in Georgia, continued to fall, with the only exception of 2001 when it temporarily slightly increased. At least partly (in addition to emigration) this was caused by decreasing birth rate.

Table 3: Dynamics of the number of births, 1998-2003

District	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Akhaltzikhe	635	585	555	532	502	486
Adigeni	329	263	205	252	252	224
Aspindza	174	182	122	138	138	124
Borjomi	429	396	340	338	280	253
Akhalkalaki	732	739	586	595	585	537
Ninotsminda	486	442	345	367	347	357
Total	2,785	2,607	2,153	2,222	2,104	1,981

Source: S-J: UNDP⁷ (1998-2002), and Regional Department of Labour, Health and Social Security (2003)

There is a general decline in the birth rate, as the death rate shows growth.

Table 4: Birth rate per 1000 of population

District	2002	2003
Akhaltzikhe	10.9	10.5
Adigeni	12.1	10.8
Aspindza	9.5	9.5
Borjomi	8.1	7.3
Akhalkalaki	8.8	8.8
Ninotsminda	10.1	10.4
Average	10.1	9.5

Source: and Regional Department of Labour, Health and Social Security

⁶ State Department of Statistics of Georgia. *Major Findings of First General National Population Census of Georgia in 2002*. Tbilisi 2004

⁷ UNDP. Samtskhe-Javakheti: Realities and Perspectives (2004). Tbilisi

Table 5: Birth and death numbers, and natural growth for 6 months, 2004

District	Birth Rate	Death Rate	Natural growth
Akhaltzikhe	255	249	6
Adigeni	110	123	-13
Aspindza	61	67	-7
Borjomi	172	268	-96
Akhalkalaki	274	213	61
Ninotsminda	141	154	-13
Total	1,013	1,074	-61

Source: Regional Department of Labour, Health and Social Security

The age median⁸ for the region is 32.2. As women live longer on average and therefore there are more elderly women than men, median age for women is - 33.9, while for men it is 30.6. Ninotsminda and then Akhalkalaki have the youngest, and Borjomi the oldest population.

Table 6: Population by age in districts (2002)

District	Males Median	Females Median	Average Median
Akhaltzikhe	31.5	36.9	33.9
Adigeni	31.2	33.9	32.5
Aspindza	31.4	33.5	32.4
Borjomi	32.8	37.6	35.8
Akhalkalaki	28.4	32.1	30.6
Ninotsminda	28.0	31.2	30.0
Total	30.6	33.9	32.2

Source: 2002 Census data.

On average, 60.9% of the population of the region is of working age, i.e. in the age range 15-65. The share of working-age males among the total number of men is considerably higher (64.8%) than in the case of females (57.3). The lowest share of the working-age population, both women and men, is found in Aspindza, while the highest is in Ninotsminda. Borjomi claims the highest share of the working age males.

Table 7: Population of working age by sex % (2003)

District	Working age males	Working age females	Working age
Akhaltzikhe	64.7	56.5	60.4
Adigeni	63.4	55.6	59.4
Aspindza	60.9	53.1	56.9
Borjomi	67.2	58.8	59.1
Akhalkalaki	64.2	57.4	60.7
Ninotsminda	66.0	59.3	62.6
Total	64.8	57.3	60.9

Source: S-J Regional Department of Statistics

Family structure/size is an important variable for understanding social processes in the region. Families are rather stable in the region. In 2003, 159 marriages and only 4 cases of divorce have been registered. While such a low number of marriages and divorces may only approximately reflect the actual situation, as the low numbers may at least partly be explained by the reluctance to register the status changes, whether for bureaucratic difficulties or for excessive expenses. This factor is expected to have distorted to some extent also the birth and the death rates.

According to our survey data, the number of family members of a respondent made on average 4.54 ($SD=1.66$)⁹. The biggest families were observed in Aspindza ($M=5.02$, $SD=1.59$) and the smallest in Akhaltzikhe ($M=4.02$, $SD=1.49$) districts. 85.9% of families

⁸ "Median" is a statistical measure equal to the value of the variable that divides the number of events/cases with the respective value above and below its meaning into two equal parts.

⁹ Here and further the statistical symbols are used as follows: "SD" is the standard deviation, while "M" is the mean value.

were headed by males and 14.1% by females, while there were also 17 single-person households, in 13 cases made by women and in 4 by men.

In good agreement with the available statistical distribution across the region's population, out of 3179 individuals named by respondents as their family members, 1596 (50.2%) were females and 1583 (49.8%) were males. Adult persons of and over 16 comprised 2615 or 82.3% of the overall number, while children made 566 or 17.7% of all family members. Among 2615 adults 50.9% (1330) were women and 49.1% (1285) were men, among 566 children 47.2% (267) were girls and 52.8% (299) were boys.

The type of settlement – rural-urban - is an important variable influencing behavioural stereotypes and attitudes of the population in Samtskhe-Javakheti, as elsewhere in Georgia. The population of the region is predominantly rural (68.4%). Only in two districts - Borjomi and Akhaltsikhe - urban population outnumbers rural. The highest proportion of the rural population is in Adigeni district, where it comprises 88.7% of the total number, and this is reflected in many characteristics of this district.

Table 8. Population by settlement type (2002)

District	Urban %	Rural %
Akhalsikhe	50.9	49.1
Adigeni	11.3	88.7
Aspindza	24.9	75.1
Borjomi	59.2	40.8
Akhalkalaki	16.1	83.9
Ninotsminda	18.3	81.7
Total	31.6	68.4

Source: 2002 Census data

According to the official classification, the region has 7 urban and 258 rural settlements, Akhaltsikhe and Borjomi being the two biggest townships. Classification of settlements is of course to great extent blurry, and there is no clear typological borderline between the smallest towns and the bigger villages. Still, this classification is as good as any other in the sense that respective variable strongly correlates with many other statistical characteristics.

Table 9. Population of urban settlements of the region

	Settlement	District	Status	Population
1	Akhalsikhe, city	Akhalsikhe	Regional/District centre	18452
2	Borjomi, city	Borjomi	District centre	14445
3	Akhalkalaki, city	Akhalkalaki	District centre	9802
4	Vale, city	Akhalsikhe		5031
5	Ninotsminda	Ninotsminda	District centre	6287
6	Aspindza	Aspindza	District centre	3243
7	Akhaldaba	Borjomi		2377
8	Bakuriani	Borjomi		1985
9	Abastumani	Akhalsikhe		1368
10	Tsagveri	Borjomi		1051
11	Adigeni	Adigeni	District centre	980
12	Bakurianis Andesiti	Borjomi		514
	Total			65,535

Source: 2002 Census data.

Ethnic composition of the region is another very important demographic characteristic, and ethnic identity appear to influence many variables, including those linked to gender relations. Two ethnic groups clearly dominate the picture - Armenians comprise the majority in the region, Georgians are the second biggest ethnicity, while other ethnic groups constitute only about 2% of the region's population.

Table 10: Population by ethnic composition, in 2002

District	Geor- gians	Armen- ians	Rus- sians	Oseti- ans	Greeks	Ukra- nians	Azeris	Abkhaz	Kurds/ Yezids	Total
Akhaltzikhe	28473	16879	410	52	129	42	13	12	-	46 134
Adigeni	19860	698	101	28	7	20	17	13	-	20 752
Aspindza	10671	2273	34	9	8	5	-	4	-	13 010
Borjomi	27301	3124	585	719	540	75	24	10	-	32 422
Akhalkalaki	3214	57516	157	10	51	14	3	3	-	60,975
Ninotsminda	476	32857	943	4	5	6	2	-	-	34,305
Total	89995	113347	2230	822	740	162	59	42	-	207,598
%	43.4	54.6	1.1	0.40	0.37	0.08	0.03	0.02	-	100
In Georgia¹⁰	3661173	248929	67671	38028	15166	7039	284761	3527	25439	4,371,535
%	83.8	5.65	1.55	0.87	0.35	0.16	6.51	0.08	0.58	100

Source: 2002 Census data.

The last three decades witnessed considerable changes in the demography of the region. The overall population in the region grew by 4.2% between the two censuses of 1979 and of 1989, although this growth was more moderate than average in Georgia. In the five districts of the region out of six, there was population growth observed between 1979 and 1989, with the only exception of Akhalkalaki district where population had declined. However, as already noted above the 2002 census revealed an opposite trend, namely the decrease of population in all districts of the region, so that it made only 88.1% of 1989 population, although again the change was less marked than in Georgia as a whole where the population loss caused the overall decrease to 80.9% of the 1989 number. The most dramatic decrease was observed in Borjomi and Akhaltsikhe, i.e. the most urbanised districts of the region.

It is interesting to note that while the population growth before 1989 occurred predominantly in the urban areas (with the exception of Adigeni and Aspindza districts where smaller increase took place also in rural areas), the subsequent decrease is again characteristic of the more volatile urban population.

Table 11. Dynamics of population in the periods between censuses in %

	1979-1989			1989-2002		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Georgia	17.4	-1.4	8.2	-23.6	-13.4	-19.1
Samtskhe-Javakheti	20.0	-3.2	4.2	-23.9	-4.9	-11.9
Akhaltzikhe	20.1	-2.9	8.9	-25.2	-5.0	-15.8
Adigeni	15.5	4.8	6.5	-36.3	4.6	-2.5
Aspindza	31.5	1.2	8.2	-14.3	1.1	-3.1
Borjomi	10.7	-5.2	4.7	-20.4	-10	-16.8
Akhalkalaki	14.9	-4.1	0.5	-35.5	-5.1	-11.8
Ninotsminda	92.1	-6.3	3.4	-9.5	-9.5	-9.5

Source: 2002 Census data for Samtskhe-Javakheti

Some tentative speculations are possible regarding the reasons for the population decline during the last decade and a half. Such decline is first of all associated with impoverishment caused by prolonged economic crisis, and mass impoverishment of the population has prompted the reduction in the number of births, increased mortality and enforced economic migration. Indeed, during the last years, there have been large movements of people mainly due to the economic crises that have hit the region. At the earlier stage, the transition shock appeared less severe for the rural than the urban population, as agriculture provided at least subsistence livelihood and a certain degree of food security for households. The decrease of urban population, and particularly the disproportionate decrease in the share of males, points to the big outflow of economic male migrants. While urban settlements saw more severe poverty during the early transition period, the urban population at the same time possessed also more resources for relocation, i.e. wider social networks, higher flexibility and educational level, more technical and interpersonal skills. At the same time Borjomi district where the share of urban population is much higher than in

¹⁰ The population numbers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not included

other districts - 59.2% against the 31.6% average for the region, - shows the highest outflow from the rural areas. Another special case is Ninotsminda, where the rates for urban and rural migration are the same. These facts indicate that there is no common pattern for out-migration but it is rather different for different socio-economic conditions in each district.

Whilst there has always been a tradition in some poorer areas for short term and seasonal migration, since independence there has been a considerable growth in the numbers of people who have migrated for economic reasons on a more long term and/or permanent basis. Like everywhere in the world, there is general tendency for younger persons to abandon rural or small urban settlements and move to bigger cities or abroad in search of job and better opportunities for livelihood. Those who are leaving are often the most able and active young people, leaving behind the older members of families. Despite some definitely negative connotations of this fact, economic migration and labour export play an increasing role in the economy of the region and represent one of the ways to overcome poverty. However, in some excessive cases this has caused demographic misbalance, violation of gender and age structure and loss of the most active labour force. Since the early 1990's, the labour migrants go mainly to Russia, but also to Europe - more and more people chose to move to Germany, US and Greece.

It is only natural that emigration is higher among ethnic minorities, particularly among those who are welcome in their respective ethnic homeland such as Greece or Israel, or have strong diasporas to support them elsewhere as in the case of Armenians and Jews. Indeed, ethnic motives also can explain part of the migration: from Borjomi district quite a number of ethnic Greeks and Ossetians left Borjomi district for good, although these were mostly people from the rural areas; also other ethnic minorities, e.g. Armenians and Russian Dukhobors, emigrated to neighbouring countries in higher proportion than ethnic Georgian population, changing ethnic balance, but to less extent age or gender balance.¹¹ From this viewpoint it is noteworthy that the rates of emigration were much higher among urban Armenians from Tbilisi with better links internationally than rural Armenians from Javakheti, although this is also partly explained by better emigration options for more educated and skilled urbanites, as noted above; although, paradoxically enough inside Samtskhe-Javakheti itself the pattern shows currently higher rural emigration (according to our survey, among migrants there were more coming from rural - 26.5%, than from urban - 19.1%, settlements).

There was some in-migration too, mostly in the aftermath of the conflict in Abkhazia. There are 2,359 internally displaced persons officially registered in the region, predominantly (87.3%) located in Borjomi district; 10.1% of IDPs live in Akhaltsikhe district, and 2.6% in Adigeni district.

According to our survey data, 24.5% of respondents point that their family member or members are abroad for already one year or more. In all they report on 198 members that live abroad -137 families have one, 29 two and 1 three migrant members. 77.6% of migrants are male and 22.4% are female. Out of 188 respondents who have reported the country of destination of their migrant family members, the biggest share, - 85.6% emigrated to Russia, 7.5% - to Greece, 2.6% - to USA, another 2.6% - to Armenia, 1.7% - went to Turkey, Spain and Germany. 157 respondents named the reasons for leaving the country, among them 79.4% named going to work abroad and pointed that they intended to return, 15.9% went for good, 4.2% went to study, 0.5% named other reason. The highest share of migrants have stayed abroad up to two years (38.6%), with 25% of those who stayed between 2 and 5 years, and 19.6% - between 5 and 10 years. The districts differed in regard to the proportion of families whose members are abroad. The highest number of families with a member abroad was in Ninotsminda, the smallest - in Adigeni. It is worth mentioning the fact that according to the data from the Ministry of Education,

¹¹ Such process of ethnic homogenisation is characteristic for the overall composition of the Georgia's population. According to the 1989 census ethnic Georgians comprised 70% of the population, with a number of significant minorities including: Armenians (8%), Russians (6%), and Azeris (6%). Traditionally, Georgians were reluctant to leave their country, while migration inside the country was much more noticeable. Although recent developments have changed this traditional pattern and currently more and more families or individuals of all ethnicities try to make a living abroad, minorities emigrate with higher intensity and as a result the ethnic structure of Georgia's population has become more homogenous. The 2002 census showed that currently 83.8% of people living in Georgia are ethnic Georgians, against 70% in 1989. An estimated 88.6% of people living in Georgia are Christian, 83.9% of whom are Orthodox, while estimated 433,000, or 9.9% of the people living in Georgia are Muslim.

during one academic year of 2003-2004, 348 pupils left schools in the region due to migration.

Table 12. Families with members abroad by districts

District	%
Akhaltzikhe N=155	14.8
Adigeni N=71	4.2
Aspindza N=45	17.8
Borjomi N=108	18.5
Akhalkalaki N=206	26.2
Ninotsminda N=115	53.0

3. Economy and Gender

Samtskhe-Javakheti in Soviet times used to be a quite well to do region. The districts of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki both enjoyed the special economic status specific for border zones, which implied higher salaries than average in the country and other benefits, huge Soviet market for local products, low prices and high employment rate. Due to the region's geographic location and its former status as of closed military zone under the Soviet regime, it was less integrated with other parts of Georgia, and economically more dependant on other regions of the Soviet Union, especially Russia. During that time, many essential supplies were cheaply provided by the state, and in turn local agricultural products were sold throughout central Russia.

Today, subsistence agriculture remains the main occupation in the countryside, and the main income generation means. The main produce of the region is potato, cabbage and fruit, as well as dairy and meat from cattle breeding. Imperfect land privatisation left farmers with mostly small plots of about 1-1.5 hectares - not allowing for high-crop agriculture. Equally negatively, the production is influenced by limited availability of seasonal credits, poor access to markets and lack of food processing industry, but also the fragmentation of land plots, lack of mechanization, problems with irrigation that do not allow for full-fledged commercial farming. As a result, the production costs for some products are higher than for imported analogues. Still, the agricultural potential of the region is significant. Even under current conditions, the region produced (in 2001) 40.2% of all potatoes produced in Georgia, with the highest yield of about 15.3 tonnes from a hectare, 5.1% of vegetables with 12.2 tonnes per hectare, 4.5% of wheat with 2.1 tonne per hectare, and 4.8% of maize (2.2 tonnes); also, there are 8.4% of the whole number of cattle, 1.8% of pigs, 13.7% - sheep and goats, 12.3% of bee families, 5.4% of poultry. The region contributed up to 8.7% of the national production of meat, 10.2% of milk, 4.2% of eggs, 21.4% of wool, and 13.8% of honey.

Many hopes are linked to the prospects of turning Samtskhe-Javakheti into transportation hub. Akhalkalaki is an important location on the route for a prospective railroad to Kars, and a highway passing through Kartsakhi border crossing and customs site. The routing was chosen for the Baku-Ceyhan and Baku-Erzurum pipelines so that they do pass through Borjomi, Akhaltsikhe and Adigeni districts, and are supposed to bring significant benefits to the population there. The pipeline contruction has already created many jobs and the compensation payments for land created certain financial surplus for many families along the pipeline route. In case of the realisation of the Kars-Tbilisi railroad project (respective agreement was signed in December 2004), railway transportation from Europe to the region and further to Central Asia will become fairly easy, while the second part of Kars-Tbilisi railway line, planned to be completed in 2006, will reach Trabzon. Finally, the reconstruction of the strategic Tsalka-Ninotsminda-Akhalkalaki highway expected in the near future will boost trade and economy in the eastern part of the region. All these transportation projects will definitely contribute to the improvement of economic and trade relations between Georgia and its southern neighbours, and to significant flows of goods from/to Central Asia.

While overall economic conditions are far from bright, it is important that, evidently, the majority of the population in Samtskhe-Javakheti do not consider themselves as poor. Actually, the overwhelming majority (82.3%) of respondents considered their families being of medium affluence - neither rich nor poor (according to 13.6% of respondents their household was poor, while 4.1% considered theirs as rich). It is interesting to note that the respondents living in urban and rural settlements do not differ statistically in the perception of the economic status of their families.

It is in Ninotsminda where the biggest share of respondents considers their families as moderately affluent – 87%, while in Aspindza and Borjomi so would claim the smallest proportion of respondents - 69%. In the rest of districts such respondents made between 82% and 86%. Respectively, significantly more families living in Borjomi district (29.6%) consider their families as poor, with Aspindza is second at 22.2% and Ninotsminda third at 13.0%, compared to the families living in other three districts of the region (below 10%, with the lowest proportion of families considering themselves as poor in Akhaltsikhe - 8.4%).

Apart of positively assessing their economic status, the majority of respondents demonstrated equally positive attitude towards future, with less than a fourth expecting their economic condition to worsen. However, the differences across districts are unexpectedly great, indicating to range in dynamics of ongoing change and different resources for growth. The most optimistic seem to be the inhabitants of Akhaltsikhe and Borjomi, expecting that their life conditions will improve in one year period, while among inhabitants of Adigeni district strikingly few expect anything to improve (15.5%).

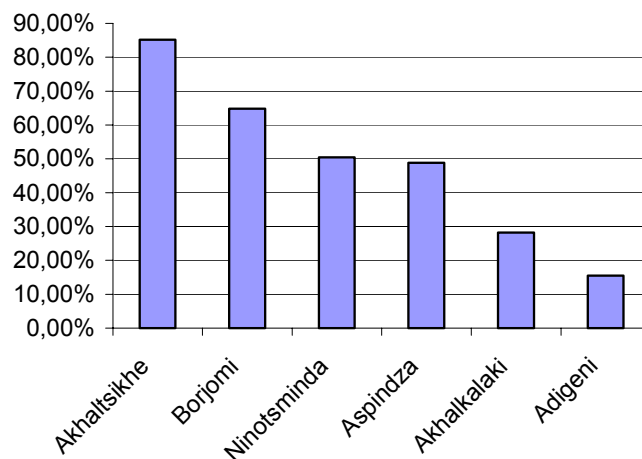


Figure 1. Respondents' evaluation of improvement in their economic status in a year

As in the case with optimism, a higher proportion of respondents in Akhaltsikhe stated that the economic condition of their families had improved since the previous year, while a significant share of inhabitants of other districts (e.g. Akhalkalaki) pointed to worsening economic conditions, and Adigeni respondents perceive the situation as stagnant or worsening.

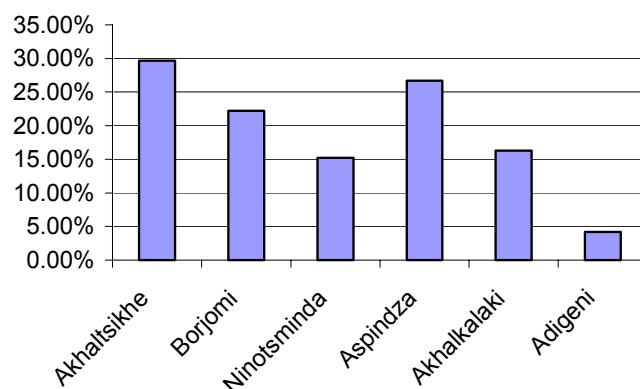


Figure 2. Perceived improvement of the economic condition during the last year

The recent change of the household's economic conditions seems to be a determinant for the perception of the current economic status, which means that the gap between those who perceive themselves as poor and those considering themselves as relatively affluent is

growing. So, the economic condition of 48.9% of those who considered their families poor had worsened since the previous year, while 62.1% of those who considered their families as affluent, had improved. On the other hand, the evaluation of the future economic prospects depends on current condition. Still, all the three groups differing by perceived economic status have demonstrated certain optimism: 69.0% of those who considered their families as rich expected improvements within a year's time, while 49.3% of moderately affluent and 40.0% of poor had such expectations.

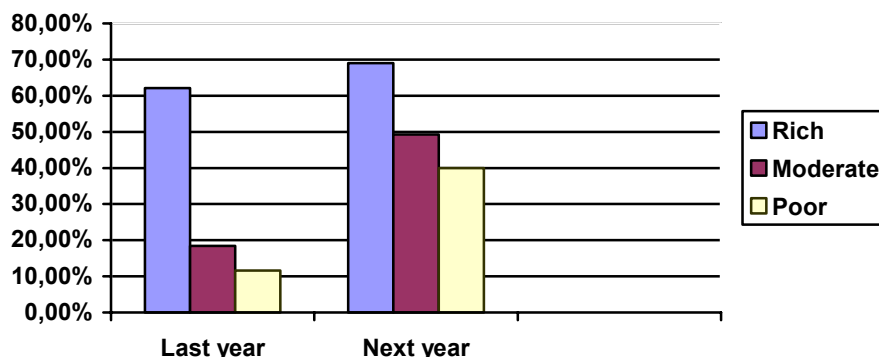


Figure 3. Current economic status of a household and perceived/expected improvement in economic conditions during the last and the next years

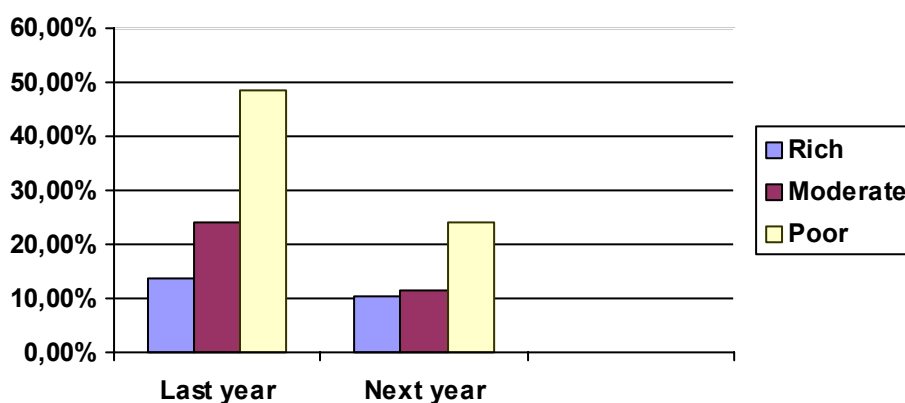


Figure 4. Current economic status of households and perceived/expected deterioration in economic conditions during the last and the next years

While many respondents did not consider their households as poor, seemingly in-kind income dominates household economy. Reported monetary income of the families during July 2004 was rather low, although the figure should be treated with caution as the underreporting of monetary income is a usual practice. About the half of respondents (45.6%) reported their summary household income to make up to 50 Lari; 27.4% reported from 50 to 100 lari, 14.5% - 100-200 Lari, and only 12.0% admitted more than 200 Lari.

Borjomi district claimed the highest proportion of respondents with family income more than 200 Lari, which is natural due to significant tourism-related business there during summer months. The data collected by survey referred to this period. It is interesting to note that at the same time relatively more Borjomi inhabitants have evaluated their families as poor. This can be attributed to the complex, multidimensional nature of poverty perception. In this concrete cases one of such factors may indeed be the timing of survey, as July is a holiday season when income is relatively high but short living, but another important factor may be the lack of significant income opportunities other than tourism, the latter available to only a part of Borjomi population, and finally, due to less isolation from more affluent parts of Georgia, respective standards and expectations may be also higher.

Not surprisingly, respondents living in the countryside report much less monetary income as compared to urbanites. Having less than 50 Lari a month was reported by more than half (53.9%) of rural respondents but twice as little (25.3%) urbanites.

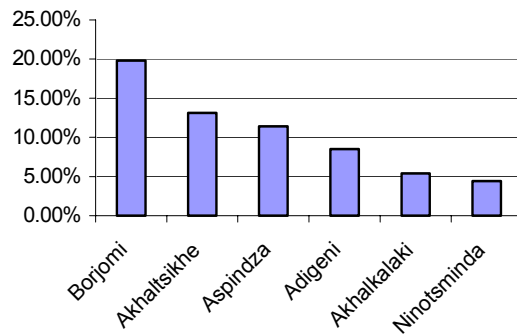


Figure 5. Families with the monthly income more than 200 Lari (July 2004)

While monetary income tends to be underreported and misleading, still the amount of reported income was correlated with the self-evaluation of affluence. From those who considered their families affluent 34.5% had income more than 200 Lari, while 12.1% of moderately affluent and 4.4% of poor reported such incomes.

Gender is an important factor affecting affluence. Women-headed households evaluated their economic conditions more negatively than male-headed households (the difference is statistically significant: *Chi-square* = 11.3, *df*.2, *p*<.005)¹². So, 23.5% of female-headed households compared to 12.1 % of male-headed household perceived their families as poor. 12.3% of male-headed families had monthly income more than 200 Lari, while just 10.2% of female-headed families reported such income. However, when assessing the change in economic status from the last year to the present, as well as regarding expected prospects for the next year, male- and female-headed households did not differ. Often, low monetary income points to the prevalence of subsistence agriculture as an income-generating activity and the dependence on in-kind means of subsistence, particularly in rural settlements. This found its confirmation when respondents were presented with a list of 8 activities for income generation and asked to indicate activities applicable to their families.

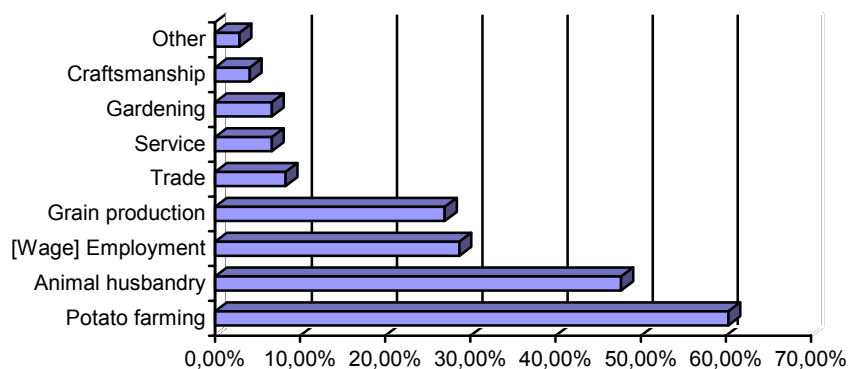


Figure 6. Main income generating activities of households

Potato farming is a leading agricultural activity in the five out of six districts, other than Borjomi. About half of respondents were busy with animal husbandry, a bit less than one third were employed either in state or private sector. Potato farming is the most developed in Akhalkalaki and Adigeni districts, animal husbandry in Adigeni and Ninotsminda, while many inhabitants of Borjomi district live mostly on wages; trade and crafts are also the most developed in Borjomi, gardening is in Aspindza and service sector in Akhalkalaki.

¹² Here and henceforth "Chi-square" is used as a non-parametric test of statistical significance for bivariate tabular analysis, which lets one know the degree of confidence possible in accepting or rejecting a hypothesis, i.e., typically, whether or not two different samples are different enough in some characteristic or aspect. "df" is for the degree of freedom, a statistical term used to denote the number of scores within any distribution that are free to vary without restriction. "p" is respectively the probability, in this case - that random samples from different groups with equal mean sentences could yield the observed difference.

Respondents were further requested to indicate prevailing activities pursued by the members of their households and different sources of income that form the livelihood of the family.

The highest proportion of families (44.6%) relies on state benefits for monetary income - i.e. pensions, allowances and stipends. About the same number 44.0% of families have wage earners, predominantly these are state jobs, although there was frequently a difficulty in sorting out differences between salaries at state or private jobs. 42.7% of families have income from farming, 18.6% get remittances from family members or kin living/working abroad, 16.6% reported income from occasional jobs, 10.1% from own business and 4.7% from using own property, i.e. renting it out or selling assets.

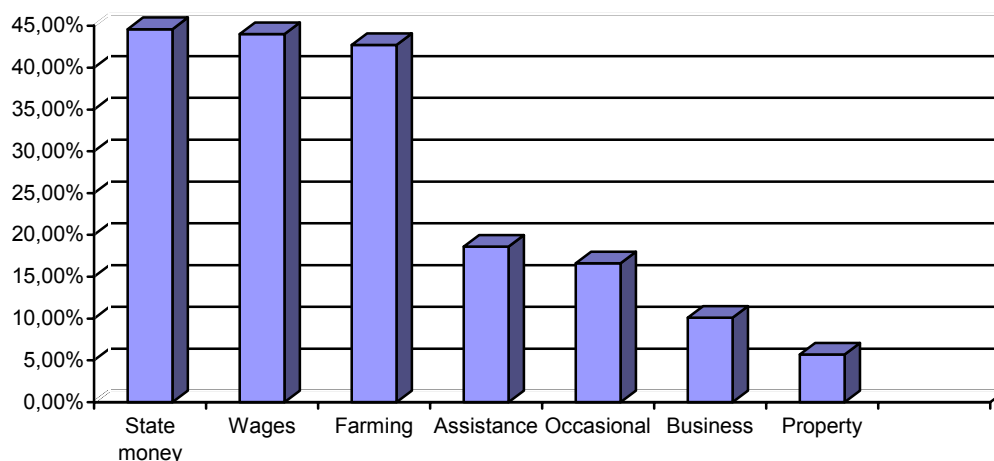


Figure 7. Sources of family income

As can be judged by the survey data presented in the Annex, the biggest share of the population in Akhaltsikhe, as well as in Aspindza, lives on wages, the majority of Adigeni and Akhalkalaki households receive income from farming, while the Borjomi population claim to live mostly on state allowances, wages, rent and business income, while those in Ninotsminda - on remittances from abroad. Of course, it should be kept in mind that survey data is not fully reliable for understanding the income structure, as respondents commonly underreport in-kind incomes and those from paralegal activities.

Respondents have reported having at their disposal 1.41 hectares of land on average ($SD=1.73$). Such a modest amount of agricultural land leads to the low productivity of farming and difficulties in monetisation of its produce. Still, out of 511 respondents who were engaged in farming, only about one fourth (27.4%) sold or exchanged a considerable part of the harvest, indicating to the predominance of subsistence agriculture. Reportedly, the biggest part of the yield was realized by respondents of Akhalkalaki district where 92.8% claimed selling half or more of the produce. In other districts - 45.6% of Akhaltsikhe, 31.9% of Ninotsminda, 25.6% of Aspindza, 16.6% of Adigeni and only 2.3% of Borjomi farmers report selling half or more of the yield.

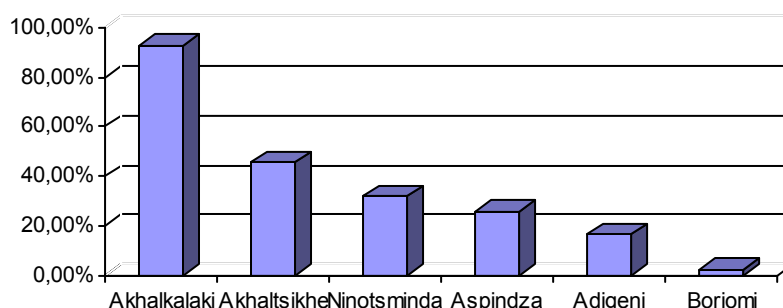


Figure 8. Share of respondents who realize half and more of the yield

Respondents reported animal breeding to be an important part of rural economy, poultry and cows being the prevailing animals on farms, particularly in Adigeni and Ninotsminda, in

the latter district sheep is also widely bred. Still it is cows that make the most significant contribution to local economies.

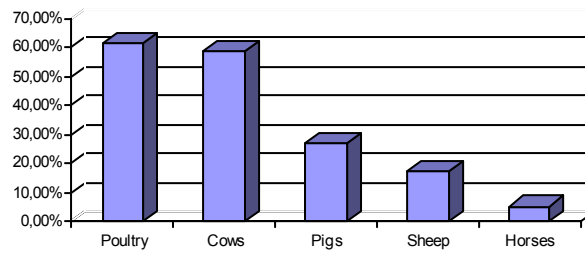


Figure 9. Possession of animals by respondents

However, about one fourth of all respondents pointed that they did not go in for farming. These were mostly urban respondents of Akhaltsikhe and Borjomi districts (60 respondents in each, which comprised 38.7% of Akhaltsikhe district respondents and 55.6% of Borjomi district respondents).

In order to better understand the role gender plays in local economy, it is important to disaggregate data about income by gender. Although it is only natural that significant amount of expenditures in a household cover general needs that cannot be differentiated by gender, and the same is true regarding at least part of household income (e.g. coming from agriculture, family businesses or remittances), still certain differences can be observed. Apart of the common household incomes, according to the survey data the main source of income for females is state assistance, i.e. pensions, allowances and stipend, while for men it is wage, though the difference in these is not great. Rather, as can be seen from the Figure 10, the biggest gender difference is observed in farming and occasional jobs. In both cases more men than women rely on them. In farming, however, followed by remittances and rent of property, the income is perceived to great extent as common for the household.

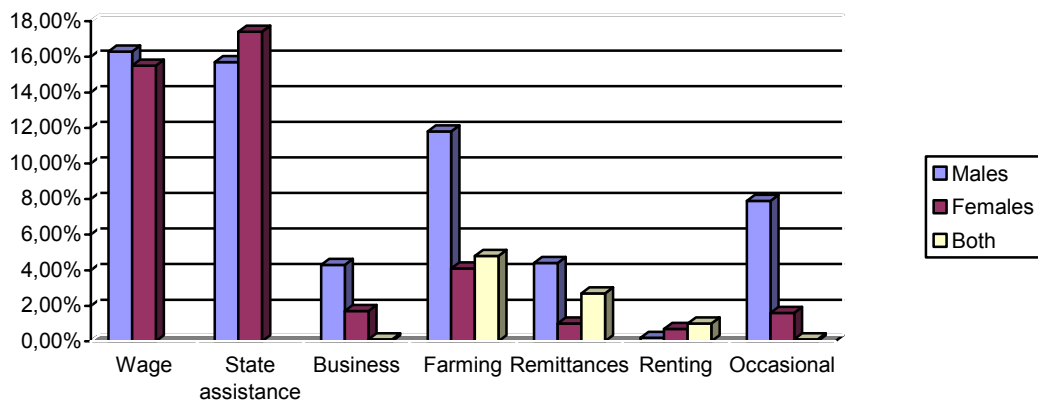


Figure 10. Income of adult males and females

Table 13. Income source by gender and by district

	Akhaltsikhe		Adigeni		Aspindza		Borjomi		Akhalikalaki		Ninotsminda N	
	M N=243	F N=254	M N=112	F N=133	M N=93	F N=87	M N=174	F N=206	M N=412	F N=494	M N=251	F N=505
Wage	23.5	17.7	17.9	12.8	16.1	10.3	32.2	23.8	9.7	13.4	8.4	7.9
State benefits	17.3	16.1	19.6	18.8	9.7	12.6	27.6	30.1	13.6	11.5	10.0	14.2
Business	3.3	1.2	8.9	3.8	2.1	0	10.3	4.8	1.9	1.0	3.6	0
Farming	13.2	5.9	34.8	7.5	8.6	8.0	0	0	9.7	3.0	13.1	3.1
Remittances	2.4	0.4	0.9	0	3.2	1.1	1.7	2.4	3.6	0.2	10.8	0
Rent	0.4	2.0	0	0	0	0	0.6	2.4	0.2	0.2	0	0
Occasional	4.1	0.4	0.9	0	4.3	2.3	17.8	4.4	6.8	0.8	10.7	2.4

We can discuss gender differences with more confidence with regards to such sources of income as wages, state assistance, business and occasional jobs. Farming, remittances provided by migrant family members and the property rent are in most cases considered as common household income, although respondents often point at their male or female

household members as the recipients of such, which is quite interesting by itself. Another problem for comparing gender differences across the different sources of income is the range of differences. In some less populated districts the sample size, men and women alike, is rather too small for strict judgement.

The biggest gender difference in person-focused sources is found in case of occasional jobs. Difference is in all districts and ranges between 0.9% in Adigeni to 13.4% in Borjomi. Men's share outnumbers women's in wages in every district except Akhalkalaki. The range of difference in wages is between 0.5% in Ninotsminda and 8.4% in Borjomi. While in case of state benefits the difference is more in favour of women, probably due to the higher number of female pensioners. The difference ranges between 0.2% in Akhaltsikhe and 4.2% in Ninotsminda. In Ninotsminda, Aspindza and in Borjomi bigger share of women than men get state assistance.

Table 14. Gender difference in income sources by districts % (men – women)

	Akhalsikhe	Adigeni	Aspindza	Borjomi	Akhalkalaki	Ninotsminda
Wage	5.8	5.1	5.8	8.4	-3.7	0.5
State benefits	0.2	0.8	-2.9	-2.5	2.1	-4.2
Business	1.1	5.1	2.1	5.5	0.9	3.6
Farming	7.3	27.3	0.6	0	6.7	10.0
Remittance	2.0	0.9	2.1	-0.7	3.4	10.8
Rent	-1.6	0	0	1.8	0	0
Occasional	4.0	0.9	2.0	13.4	6.0	8.3

Having wages and own business distinguish affluent families from families with medium affluence and poor, as the poor rely more on state benefits, renting and occasional jobs, while families with middle affluence rely more than others on farming and remittance from migrant family members. About a half of respondents (48.6%) did not report having own income, 25.8% had it occasionally and only 25.5% claimed having regular income. From those with own income, either regular or occasional, the majority (67.0%) admitted spending it at their own deliberation, while 33.0% claimed in most cases discussing expenditures with other family members. Independent income was reported by a much higher share of urban (31.3%) than of rural (23.2%) population (*Chi Square* 37.3, *df*2, *p*<.001).

The tradition related to heritage and transfer of ownership in a household is an important aspect of the family life and power structure. According to 37.6% of respondents, following the death of parents in case there is a son and an unmarried daughter in a family, the house should be divided equally between these children. According to 32.0% respondents, the bigger part of the house should be inherited by a son, while 28.5% argued that the house should go solely to the son; according to 0.9% only the daughter should inherit the house, and 1.0% argued that the daughter should have a bigger part.

Similar picture reflects the land inheritance. According to 40.4% of respondents, the land should be divided equally between the children; according to 30.4%, the bigger part of the land should be inherited by the son, 27.7% argued that the land plot should go to the son only; according to 0.9% - to the daughter only; and 0.6% argued the daughter should have a bigger part.

In case of movable property the attitude is more egalitarian. According to 53.2%, inherited property (money, jewellery, etc) should be divided equally between the children, according to 24.7% the bigger part of property should be inherited by son, 18.9% thinks that the property should go to the son only, according to 2.1% - to the daughter only, and to 1.1% - the daughter should have a bigger part.

Table 15. Preferences with the inheritance of property %

Division	House	Land	Property
Equal	37.6	40.4	53.2
Preference to son	60.5	58.1	43.6
Preference to daughter	1.9	1.5	3.2

The picture is much more clear with regards to dowry in the case of divorce. 96.1% of respondents agreed that the divorced women should be able to take back her dowry, while only 3.9% were against such option.

Opinions divided with regards to the disposing of an income earned by a woman in the household. According to 62.0% of respondents, a woman should be able to spend the main part of her personal income as she would like herself, without discussing it in advance with the family; however, 38.0% would not grant this right to a woman. Not surprisingly, more women (68.6%) than men (55.2%) asserted that women should be able to spend their own money independently (Chi square = 13.3, df= 1, $p < .001$). It should be noted, that it is not only women who are limited in their freedom of disposing earned moneys. A slightly higher proportion (67.4%) than in the case of women would grant the freedom of spending income to men, while 32.6% were against it.

In 75.8% of families males were reported to be the main breadwinners, in 20.3% women took this role and 3.8% reported that both spouses contributed equally to the family budget. About 60.0% of respondents reported women to make the second significant contributors to family budgets. While males and females traditionally contribute differently to family budgets, the most important difference is between the male-headed and female-headed households, the number of the latter on the rise. The biggest difference between male and female-headed households is found in farming, with smaller share of female-headed households deriving income from it. Observable difference is also evident in case of state benefits and wages, though in these cases female-headed households report higher share of this source of income.

Table 16. Income structure in male- and female-headed households

No	Income sources	Male-headed families % No=602	Female-headed families % No=98	Difference % (male-headed - female-headed)
1	Wage	42.9	51.0	-8.1
2	State benefits	60.3	72.4	-12.1
5	Business	9.6	13.3	-3.7
6	Farming	45.5	25.5	20
7	Remittances	20.3	19.4	0.9
9	Rent	5.1	9.2	-4.1
12	Occasional	18.4	16.3	2.1

At the end we would like to discuss an important indicator of economic status – ownership over mobile phone devices. In total, 24.2% of respondents or 169 persons have claimed possessing mobile phones, while in addition 19.9% respondents reported that their other family members owned at least one mobile phone. All in all, 334 accounted family members appeared to own mobile phones, which makes 12.8% of observed adults. Possession of mobile phones is associated with economic well being - 44.8% of those who considered their families as affluent reported having mobiles, as compared to 25.3% of those of medium affluence and 10.5% of the poor.

Everywhere a higher proportion of men owned a mobile, but the difference is the highest in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki, and the lowest in Borjomi. The situation observed across the regions in the case of 334 family members including respondents is shown on the following chart:

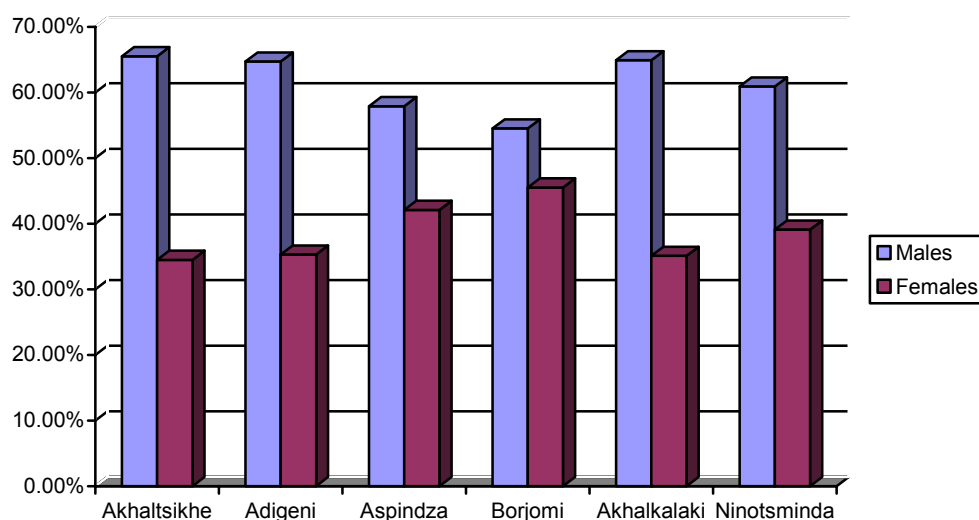


Figure 11. Possession of mobile phones by men and women across districts

Among those who owned a mobile, 38.9% were women and 61.1% were men. Town dwellers had more mobiles than those living in villages (*Chi Square* 6.77, *df*1, *p*<.05). 30.8% of respondents living in towns and 21.5% living in villages claimed having mobiles. Also the greater share of the family members respondents appeared to have mobiles if living in towns (35.5%) than in villages (14.0%) (*Chi Square* 40.58, *df*1, *p*<.001).

In order to understand the profile of poverty in the region, it is important to take into account that for many, state benefits and pensions, whatever small, constitute an important part of the household budget.

Table 17. Persons receiving state assistance (2003)

District	IDP	Disabled	Pensioner	Vulnerable	Total	% of population
Akhaltsikhe	239	1720	10296	896	13151	28.5
Adigeni	60	1100	4566	307	6033	29.1
Aspindza	0	650	3051	269	3970	30.5
Borjomi	2060	970	10500	714	14244	41.4
Akhalkalaki	0	1530	8051	834	10415	17.1
Ninotsminda	0	740	5482	436	6658	19.4
Total	2359	6710	41946	3456	54471	26.2
%	4.3	12.3	77.0	6.4	100	

Source: S-J Regional Department of Labour, Health and Social Security

According to the data on 2004, as many as 20.3% of the population of the region receive pensions. Among them the retirement (labour) pensioners constitute the biggest group, representing 80.6% of all pensioners. As the population is aging, there is an increasing number of pensioners.

Table 18. Pensioners by categories by districts (2004)

	Akhaltsikhe	Adigeni	Aspindza	Borjomi	Akhalkalaki	Ninotsminda	Total	%
War invalids	268	99	83	355	224	107	1160	2.8
War veterans	584	60	131	209	138	205	1345	3.2
Retirement pensioners	8269	3667	2430	6205	8632	4610	33915	80.6
Victims of political repressions	221	76	75	65	248	66	679	1.6
Social pensions	697	403	194	826	972	342	3390	8.1
Other categories	257	241	138	430	314	205	1572	3.7
Total	10296	4546	3051	8089	10528	5535	42057	100
Population	46,134	20,752	13,010	34,422	60,975	34,305	207,598	
Pensioners/population ratio %	22.3	21.9	23.4	23.5	17.3	16.1	20.3	

Source. S-J Regional Department of Labour, Health and Social Security

The biggest share of pensioners comes on Borjomi, the smallest on Akhalkalaki, as reflecting the population age structure in the districts.

Another important factor is state allowances. The biggest share of allowances, 60.7% comes on lonely persons, and due to the demographic reality, these are predominantly women. Together with the blind persons they got the highest amount of allowance, 22 GEL¹³. The biggest share of the population that gets allowances live in Borjomi and in Aspindza, the smallest - in Ninotsminda.

Table 19. Household allowances provided to 6 Categories of households (2003).

District	lonely	HH with 2 / more ch	orphans	Blind	Invalids up to 18 years of age	HH with 7 / more ch.	Total	%	% to population
Akhalsikhe HH	512	77	13	64	93	3	762		
Recipients	512	184	15	64	93	23	891	26.1	1.9
Adigeni HH	154	36	3	14	49	0	256		
Recipients	154	87	3	14	49	0	307	9.1	1.5
Aspindza HH	179	15	3	13	33	0	243		
Recipients	179	41	3	13	33	0	269	7.9	2.1
Borjomi HH	372	62	8	60	71	1	574		
Recipients	372	154	10	60	71	7	674	19.7	2.1
Akhalkalaki HH	549	54	16	91	46	1	757		
Recipients	549	123	16	91	46	9	834	24.4	1.4
Ninotsminda HH	304	22	3	25	41	0	395		
Recipients	304	60	6	25	41	0	436	12.8	1.3
Total HH	2070	266	46	267	333	5	2987		
Recipients	2070	649	53	267	333	39	3411	100	
Monthly allowance in lari	22.0	14.6	14.6	22.0	23.2	4.6			
% in recipients in types	60.7	19.0	1.5	7.9	9.8	1.1	100		

Source: S-J Regional Department of Labour, Health and Social Security

Gender Inequalities in the Labour Market

When the beginning of the 1990s brought a sharp fall in GDP, many enterprises initially responded by hoarding available labour force, hoping for better times. However, soon the majority of enterprises ceased operation, unemployment began to rise and real wages wherever still existent dropped. Economic crisis affected everyone, but it is fully legitimate to ask a question, whether the transition has increased gender inequality in the labour market. Analysis of some available labour market data suggests that the ratio of female to male activity rates in formal sector has not declined, or declined insignificantly, over recent years, and in some cases has even increased, indicating that women are more likely to be employed than men, particularly in urban setting. However, the higher labour costs associated with women's maternity and child-raising benefits pushes employers in formal sector to discriminate against women. As no effective government policy has been introduced to mitigate such costs, social attitudes are unlikely to change quickly. As employment has shifted to informal sector, the degree of labour market segregation and wage discrimination appears to be increasing, although as there is insufficient empirical evidence, making definite statements does not seem justified.

Despite the existence of equality provisions throughout Georgian law, discriminatory legislation persists to some extent, which at a first glance can be considered as positive, but in fact work against women. For example, while Georgia's Law on Public Services implicitly ensures equal treatment based on a person's professional capacity, it specifies male civil servants to retire at age 65, while for female employees retirement age is 60. Similarly, although Georgia's Labour Code explicitly proscribes discrimination on the basis of sex in hiring and remuneration, it prohibits pregnant women and nursing mothers or those with infants to work at night or overtime. More important is women's tendency to concentrate in relatively low paid occupations, which accounted for a large proportion of gender pay gaps, although effect of this was relatively small compared not only to other countries with similar income levels but also to Western Europe. Indeed, does the fact that women have increasingly entered the labour market really mean that the gap between male and female

¹³ As of July 2004. Later the amount of pensions got reconsidered and somewhat increased.

labour participation is irrelevant? And if women who look for work are successful in finding it, what are the typical characteristics of female work compared to that of male counterparts? Naturalistic beliefs about gender, based on the assumption on the essentially inferior capacities of women, play a fundamental role in the labour segregation, and respective patterns are sustained by "tradition" as much as by the rational strategies of individual employers and employees. Two dimensions of occupational segregation are commonly identified: horizontal – when men and women are found in different occupations; and vertical - women and men hold different positions in occupational hierarchies, with men as a rule dominating higher levels.

Therefore, although the gender gap is relatively narrow in terms of horizontal dimension of female labour force participation, it is quite wide on vertical dimension. High-level positions are perceived as more appropriate for men. It also remains more socially acceptable for women to occupy roles such as assistant manager, saleswoman or schoolteacher. Ensuring women equal employment opportunities in a newly privatised, free-market economy requires not only specific anti-discrimination legislation, but also effective mechanisms of legal protection. The generalized statements of equality in Georgia's Constitution and its international commitments are insufficient and unrealised.

Women's economic participation often takes the form of street vending, household-based goods production, cross-border trading and subsistence agriculture. While men have had difficulty in adapting to their loss of social status in the face of widespread unemployment, women, along with young people of both sexes, have capitalized on emerging opportunities in the fields of small-scale trade and consumer services, and in many instances are the family breadwinners.

Small-scale trade, making the great part of informal economy, is difficult to track, and is commonly overlooked in economic evaluations. Indeed, most informal economy employment is self-employment in trade, service or agriculture.

Informal economy means being outside the legal and regulatory frameworks, and is thus normally characterized by a high degree of vulnerability. The informal sector represents a significant part of the economy, and certainly of the labour market in Georgia, and plays a major role in employment creation, production and income generation. In urban areas such as Akhaltsikhe, Borjomi or Akhalkalaki, the informal economy tends to absorb most of the expanding labour force that has not migrated elsewhere. Informal economy employment is a necessary survival strategy under the conditions of lack or deficiency of social safety nets. Statistics on employment in the informal economy are essential for obtaining a clear picture of the contributions of all workers, women in particular, to the economy, but are virtually unavailable. Indeed, the informal economy has been considered as a possible fallback position for women who are excluded from paid employment. It is often the only source of income for women, especially in those areas where cultural norms bar them from work far from home and where, because of incompatibility with household responsibilities, they cannot undertake regular working hours. Informal economy workers are rarely organized for effective representation and have little or no voice at the workplace. Informal employment is normally unstable and insecure. Importantly, informal sector employment lacks legal protection and benefits and thus increases women's vulnerability.

Despite the increased involvement of women in labour, especially informal, the society in Samtskhe-Javakheti remains predominantly patriarchal and gender relations within the household, while changing, continue to reflect a strong 'male breadwinner' model as a norm. Despite their heavy participation in the labour market, women are still seen as secondary workers, often unable to commit themselves fully to their jobs and to pursue their careers because of their double role as workers and main providers of care for the household.

Samtskhe-Javakheti is not different from the rest of the country in regard to involvement in labour force. According the official employment statistics, there is no great difference in the overall picture, although in general the employment figures are extremely low. However, these figures may be strongly misleading, as they do not account for informal employment, and only partly cover self-employment. Still, according to the data provided by S-J regional department of labour, health and social security in 2003 only 11.4% of the population in the region was employed, while 60.7% of the population in the region are of productive age..

The best situation in regard to employment was in Aspindza, where 17.2% of population of working age are employed.

Table 20. Employed in 2003

District	Employed	Population of working age			% of employed to those of working age
		Males	Females	Total	
Akhalsikhe	3400	14,401	13,483	27,884	12.2
Adigeni	1534	6,402	5,922	12,324	12.4
Aspindza	1274	3,854	3,548	7,402	17.2
Borjomi	2944	19,928	9,968	9,960	14.8
Akhalkalaki	3640	19,033	17,998	37,031	9.8
Ninotsminda	1535	11,216	10,265	21,481	7.1
Total	14,327	64,874	61,176	126,050	11.4

Source: S-J Regional Department of Labour, Health and Social Security

These general observations may be supplemented and to certain extent illustrated by the survey data. Although respondents reported more male than female members of their respective families having wages, respondents themselves showed a slightly higher proportion of females (29.2%) as having a job. On average, about one third of the respondents (28.8%) work either in state or private organization, or have own business. 8.4% reported to be a pensioner. Women surprisingly enough seem to be more attached to their work. Out of all working female respondents, 58.7% pointed that they would still continue their work even in case they would not be in need of income; However, among men this opinion was shared by only 52.0%. Accordingly, more women (93.2%) as compared to men (89.5%) considered their work as very important to them. Such situation may reflect the fact that many working women continue to stay at their traditional jobs in education and healthcare, which they like, while many men were obliged to change their occupation in search of higher income. It should also be noted that males spend more time at their work. In general, those who do work, spend at their job on average 5.5 days a week (SD=1.4), between 1 and 16 hours per day (M=7.5; SD=2.4). Men on average spend at work more days than women (M=5.7; SD=2.4 for men and M=5.3; SD=1.1 for women), and also work longer on daily basis (M=8.2; SD=2.3) than women (M=7.0; SD=2.4).

Unemployment is very high, as those who do not work on a regular basis make more than two thirds of respondents. Among unemployed men, 93.4% want to work, but cannot do so due to the following reasons: Could not find a job (80.5%); Due to poor health or "other" reasons (10.8%); Busy due to family obligations or farming needs (8.2%); Other family members would not allow to work (0.5%). In case of unemployed women the proportion of those who want to work is somewhat lower - 84.2%. These have named the following reasons for not working: Could not find a job (60.6%); Busy due to family obligations or farming needs (16.5%); Due to poor health or "other" reasons (15.4%); Other family members would not allow to work (7.4%). It is worth noticing the high number of respondents blaming family duties as a cause for not working, but particularly disturbing is the frequency of other family members forbidding female family members to work and earn income. It is also worth noting that the notion of not working is somewhat blurred and certainly does not exclude some income generating work on a family plot or irregular jobs.

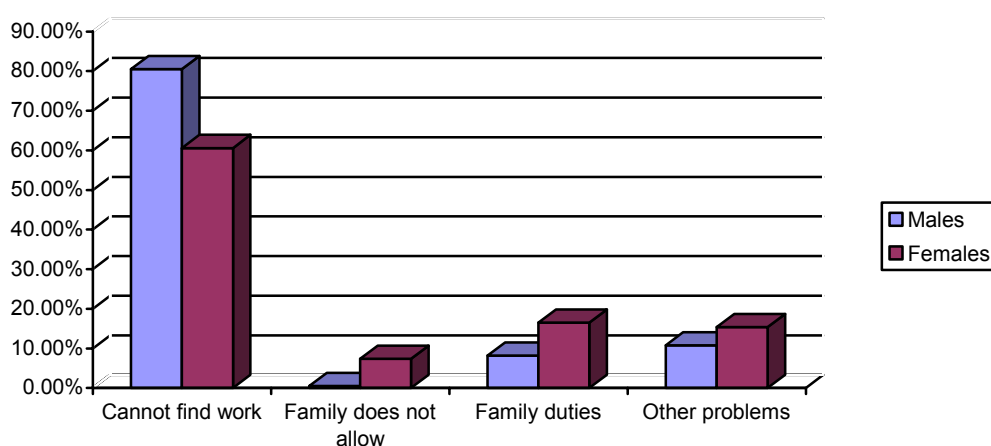


Figure 12. Reasons for not working among men and women

Common attitudes towards employment are also not gender neutral. As many as 62.7% of respondents expressed their opinion that in the case of scarcity of employment opportunities, preference for taking a job should be given to men. (31.5% did not agree and 5.8% had no opinion). However, such attitude is not equally shared across gender, as women and men differ in their attitude (Chi square = 61.2, df= 2, $p < .001$) - 77.2% of men and 48.7% of women agree that employment preference should be given to a man. Such opinion is also significantly more common among rural respondents (65.7% against 55.1%, correspondingly, Chi square = 7.34, df= 2, $p < .05$).

In general, common attitudes do not support female employment. 60.4% of respondents expressed their opinion that a woman should not work if there is no such necessity in a family. (35.2% disagreed, 3.4% did not know). Again, males and rural population appear to be the more conservative: 73.4% of men and 47.9% of women respondents (Chi square = 50.4, df= 2, $p < .05$) opposed the idea of woman working, and more rural (63.6%) than urban (52.7%) respondents maintained such an opinion (Chi square = 8.27, df= 2, $p < .05$). The majority of respondents (77.3%) also admitted that in the case of prolonged unemployment it would be appropriate for a man to emigrate for 2-3 years, while much less, - only 21.4% considered this appropriate for women to do.

Apart of some dubious moral arguments, the reason for such preferential attitude towards men is deeply rooted in the general belief that men are better at virtually every job or task - such opinion is shared by 52.2% of respondents (39.4% would not agree to such statement, and 8.5% had no opinion). Again, rural respondents tend to be more conservative, as 58.8% of them against 35.5% of urbanites think that men are more skilled than women (Chi square = 35.68, df= 2, $p < .001$). This is also related to the traditional concept of gender roles. 72.2% of respondents argued that it would be better for everyone if men worked outside a household, while women dealt with the housework. (24.2% did not agree, 3.2% did not know). Such an opinion was supported by 81.8% of men and 63.0% of women (Chi square = 30.7, df= 2, $p < .001$). Respectively, almost everyone (90.9%) argued that husband's income should exceed wife's income. (6.5% disagreed and 2.6% has no opinion) and there is small gender difference (Chi square = 8.2, df= 2, $p < .05$) in sharing such opinion, as 93.8% of men and 88.1% of women stated that husbands should earn more. Thus, the general attitude favours males, and maintains that the preference in employment (and as will be shown below to lesser degree in education) should be given to men. But still female respondents opt for more involvement in the labour force, than men grant to them and in general demonstrate more egalitarian attitudes.

It is interesting to note that during focus-group sessions, a number of women also declared that they would prefer their husbands to work rather than themselves, as unemployment has strongly adverse impact on men, and through their depressive mood and deteriorated health, on the family as a whole.

In order to understand better the gender dimension of employment, it is helpful to consider the cases of medical and educational institutions. In the sphere of health and education, traditionally dominated by female, key managerial positions are as a rule occupied by men.

At the first glance, among the administrative cadre at the medical institutions overall there is not much gender gap, which creates an impression of gender balance. Men figure as directors in 53.5% of medical facilities, but this difference does not look high. However, men are predominantly the heads of much bigger institutions – hospitals (10 out of 14 hospitals operating in the region are headed by men), while there are more women as heads of much smaller clinics. At the same time, there are significant differences by districts – so, in Aspindza both high positions in the medical hierarchy are occupied by women, while in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda all health facilities are headed by men, in line with general pattern of male domination. It is also worth repeating that in all medical facilities nurses are exclusively women.

Table 21: Top positions in healthcare institutions by gender and district

	Male	Female	Total	Male %	Female%
Regional		1	1	0	100
Akhaltzikhe	8	7	15	53.3	46.7
Adigeni	5	6	11	45.4	54.6
Aspindza	1	3	4	25.0	75.0
Borjomi	6	10	16	37.5	62.5
Akhalkalaki	4	0	4	100	0
Ninotsminda	5	0	5	100	0
Total	29	27	56	51.8	48.2

The pattern is even more obvious if one looks at the educational institutions in the region. This poorly financed and remunerated sphere is totally dominated by women, who make almost all of kindergarten employees (only 3 males recorded) and about four fifths of school staff members.

Table 22. Number of employees at schools and kindergartens

	Kindergarten			Schools		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
Akhaltzikhe	3	59	62	136	564	700
Adigeni	0	26	26	132	356	488
Aspindza	0	26	26	108	296	404
Borjomi	0	159	159	98	524	622
Akhalkalaki	0	28	28	297	1108	1405
Ninotsminda	0	8	8	177	604	781
Total	3	306	309	948	3452	4400
%	0.9	99.1	100	21.5	78.5	100

Source: Regional Department of Education

However, when looking at the administrative staff of the educational institutions, the picture changes. While directors of all kindergartens are women, the situation is reversed in regard to school directors - here male prevalence is obvious, as they are occupying director's position in 70% of schools. At schools as elsewhere, the higher the size and the social status of the institution, the stronger is the prevalence of men as chief administrators. If in elementary school males constitute only 28.1% of directors, at schools with 1-8 classes they are 69.0% and at schools with the full educational cycle/or tertiary level departments - 75.4%.

Table 23. Gender distribution among directors in the educational system (2004)

	Elementary								High school				Total			
	M	F	not reported	T	M	F	not reported	T	M	F	not reported	T	M	F	not reported	T
Akhaltzikhe		5	3	8	5	2	8	15	10	3	9	22	15	10	20	45
Adigeni	5	8	7	20	5	2	2	9	7	6	2	15	17	16	11	44
Aspindza	1	2		3	5	5		10	6	4		10	12	11		23
Borjomi	1	8	2	11	2	2	2	6	11	4		15	14	14	4	32
Akhalkalaki			1	1	12	5		17	36	8	6	50	48	13	7	68
Ninotsminda	2			2	9	1	1	11	28	7	4	39	39	8	5	52
Total	9	23	13	45	38	17	13	68	98	32	21	151	145	72	47	264
%	28.1	71.9			69.0	30.0			75.4	24.6			69.6	33.2		

Similar pattern is observed in the leading higher education institution in the region - Akhaltzikhe branch of Tbilisi State University – as the male domination in the positions of authority is obvious.

Table 24. Gender structure of the staff of the Akhaltsikhe branch of Tbilisi State University

	Males	Females	Total
Management/Administration			
Rector and pro-rectors	3	-	3
Deans	6	3	9
Head of chairs	5	4	9
Heads of departments/scientific secretary/head of committee	5	21	26
	19	28	47
Teaching staff			
Professors and associate professors	71	18	89
Senior lecturers/lecturers /invited lecturers	39	114	153
	110	132	242
Secretaries/assistants/press-service	2	40	42
Logistics	18	10	28
	149	210	359

5. Quality of Life and Social Services

One of the most important specificities of Samtskhe-Javakheti lies in its geographical and cultural diversity that, on the one hand, is a great potential of development for activities such as tourism, but on the other hand, complicates the application of a unified approach to the implementation of social policies. The significant portion of the region's territory is highlands, characterized by harsh climatic and environmental conditions, steep slopes, and, in certain cases, aridity. Particularly visible are the differences in the rural and urban communities, in the mountains and in the lowlands. Life in the countryside has less changed than in the cities, as far as it was always more isolated from central power, economic systems and way of life. However the deterioration of transportation system, roads and communications, as well as multiple increases in prices of industrial products and fuel places the relative advantage of food self-sufficiency under question. Furthermore, while isolation may have been an initial advantage, helping to cushion shocks of a new political and economic environment, the lack of information in rural areas coupled with having increasingly to pay for education and health care will make the geographic isolation and lack of inclusion in the monetised market economy - a disadvantage in the near future.

The key aspect of the quality of life is habitat, which is everything that physically surrounds a human being, the material environment in which an individual actually exists and functions and thus the immediate scene on which the story of his life is presented. For the majority of people, the results of economic or social development and subsequent change in quality of life are reflected through both underlying and current conditions of the habitat. The development process both depends heavily on, and in return deeply affects, the habitat in which individuals live. These complex exchanges, and the roles of habitat generally, cannot be always adequately reflected through bare statistical data on, for example, amount of living area per capita of population, or percentage of population with access to natural gas supply or central heating, because the quality of habitat is not easy to reflect only through simple, measurable data, that in our case - when formally existing infrastructure would not necessarily be of use - may be even misleading. Although comparable statistics, including specific indices, may be necessary for general assessments on the relative status of the region within the country, or for international comparisons, it is rather the qualitative properties of habitat which merit greater attention in our specific context.

While the results of a long practice of bad governance and mismanagement in public services can be found almost everywhere in Georgia, still Adigeni, a district centre in the Southern province of Samtskhe-Javakheti, stands apart. Development of this small town dates from fifties of the last century. Next to a small number of private houses, several-story buildings have been built there. These were both the solemn administrative buildings, characteristic of the architecture of Stalin epoch, and mostly 4-storey apartment buildings. Running water and sewerage were installed. The houses served as a demonstration of then popular slogan of diminishing the difference between village and town.

But the happiness did not last long for the inhabitants. Now, for more than a decade there is no running water in these houses, and at best water is provided to the tap in the yard, for 2 hours a day. This means that about 20 families queue every morning to fill whatever can be filled and carry water to their flats. A family needs approximately 20 buckets of water a day. Water often becomes the source of rows among neighbours - some have to go to the work and cannot stand in the line, some collect much more than others, so that not everyone can get the water. Laundering is a public affaire, with an advantage of an opportunity to socialise.

But worst of all lack of running water in houses reflects on sewerage. Due to a small amount of water used for flushing toilets, the sewerage pipes get regularly clogged, while the system is old leaking. As a result, almost all cellars of apartment buildings are filled with sewerage, so that terrible odour stands all over the houses. One can only wonder why there is no serious epidemic as yet.

The situation is even worse at the hospital, polyclinics and the maternity house, located in buildings that has no water supply at all. There is not even a tap in the yard. The first thing that medical personnel do in the morning is fetching water from the neighbourhood.¹⁴ The relatives of the patients are obliged to bring water in the same way, while doctors bring along drinking water when they come to their working place. Patients have to go out of the building, as there is no toilet inside. This takes place in the 21 century, in a town that is less than 300 km afar from the capital city.

Human Development Report: Georgia, 2003-2004. UNDP

Different life styles in rural and urban communities are common for most societies. However, the Soviet regime greatly reinforced this difference in Samtskhe-Javakheti with its system of passports that deprived most peasants of freedom of migration or of choice of occupation other than work at the *kolkhoz* or *sovkhoz*, but particularly through enforcement of special border-zone regime along Turkish border and therefore isolation. Before the end of the Soviet power the regulations gradually became less strict, and although it was still difficult to move freely, the difference between the quality of life as experienced in rural and urban areas gave rise to increased levels of migration into cities. However, with independence, along abolishing of restrictive regulations in some cases the economic crises had the reverse effect pushing people to return to rural areas as they offered access to land with the advantage of providing a sustainable livelihood, even if only limited to food self-sufficiency.

Differences between the urban and rural settlements, but also between different towns, find their expression in the quality of utilities, and the stability, or existence, of the supplies in electricity, water, and piped gas in the first place. Piped water is a very serious problem in many places, but often if the water is available, it may be of poor quality, as is e.g. in the town of Akhaltsikhe. Absence of piped gas apart from being an inconvenience causes the excessive logging for firewood. Rapidly progressing deforestation may lead to environmental disaster. However, what is almost totally absent in the great majority of smaller settlements is any system of sewerage, while even if exists, the poor condition of water pipes and sewerage system often causes contamination of potable water in natural water reservoirs and rivers, where the waste waters would go directly, degrading tourist potential but also bringing the risk of epidemic disease. Another striking deficiency in small settlements is that of bathing facilities. Not only the majority of houses, otherwise of impressive size and stature, will be lacking any bathroom or shower, in majority of such settlements there is even no public bath so that inhabitants have to rely on pre-archaic methods of bathing. The worst thing with all these deficiencies is that in many cases the population would not even realise the possibility the convenience of having such facilities, and until the real need will develop, there is little probability for drastic change in improving hygienic opportunities.

It is obvious that many problems in the region are linked to undeveloped social infrastructure and therefore to the lack of access to basic social services of adequate quality. This hampers development of human capital. Depreciation of human capital in its turn leads to deepening of poverty and its transformation into chronic form. Inadequacy of social services and deterioration of human capital is a nodal problem for vulnerable and poor strata of the society. Like elsewhere in Georgia, the huge problem is ineffective functioning of social security, only partly cushioned by extended kinship network in traditionally helpful communities. The amount of pensions and other types of social allowances is less than absolute subsistence minimum and produces little positive effect.

Quality of life is largely determined by the health. Situation with healthcare is very difficult and is discussed in detail later. But here we would like to summarize that present situation with health is the result of the low efficiency of public healthcare activities, especially in terms of introduction of healthy life style and prevention of diseases, but also of the inefficiency of primary healthcare system in remote areas and reduced accessibility to basic medical service. The majority of the population in rural areas is not provided with safe and healthy environment, which increases vulnerability and deteriorates the health condition of the poor. Actual reason of morbidity lies also in the lack of basic awareness about the prophylaxis and healthy lifestyle among the population, insufficiency of capabilities for early diagnostics and prophylactic measures – against the background of increased health-threatening factors. The poor have insufficient resources to take due care of their health,

¹⁴ Situation has somewhat improved recently at the hospital, but overall remains gloomy.

travel to remote urban centres and get quality medical treatment in costly medical institutions. The danger of worsened health is higher in poor families, who also make less use of prevention measures than more affluent population and often suffer from unhealthy lifestyle, especially excessive alcohol usage and smoking mostly among males. At the same time, insufficient attention to health problems results in increased probability of serious deterioration of health and entailed expenditures. Drastic deterioration of health condition, which requires hospitalisation or a long-term treatment, can be detrimental for the economic status of a household. Worsening of health condition (caused by malnutrition, stress, inadequate prophylaxis) lowers labour productivity and therefore capacity to cope not letting the poor to get out of the vicious circle.

Next to and associated with affluence, leisure is the factor affecting health. In no part of Samtskhe-Javakheti are there many opportunities for the leisure activities for the young people. There are next to no cinemas, almost no computer or Internet access but in towns, and very few sports facilities, very few libraries. As a result, increase in delinquency is to be expected. Civil society is only starting to develop, mostly with the assistance of the international organisations. It is not evenly developing. In Akhaltsikhe NGO community, as well as media, are much more numerous and active. This is due to more openness and better communications, but also partly linked to the existence of the university, which serves as a crystallisation centre for many civil initiatives, also attracting active, educated young people. In Akhalkalaki, possibly because of the location of the Russian base, until very recently international effort was much more limited than even in neighbouring and much smaller Ninotsminda.

6. Education and Gender

Availability of opportunities for education is one of the key dimensions of the quality of life. Georgia has traditionally scored relatively well in terms of average indicators of educational attainment, and have had low levels of gender inequality by international standards.¹⁵ The population here traditionally paid special attention to the issues of education, and providing children with respective opportunities were always high on the family agenda. It is worth noting that the importance and the need to obtain good education, and the necessity to increase demand for knowledge at schools were universally stressed by the pupils that took part in our essay-writing exercise. The question arises, however, whether the systemic difficulties and the lack of clear direction experienced in the last decade, the increasing incidence of poverty, and shrinking government budgets have combined to erode some of the achievements of the pre-transition era in terms of education accessibility and quality, and among other things of gender equality in education.

Successes or failures in educating citizens is central for state building and social cohesion in such setting, as the educational system both influence and reflect citizens' values, customs, and collective priorities. Education is a powerful factor of nation-building, but it can also promote-or stifle-local, regional, ethnic, and other customs and identity, and among other things influence the formation of inter-gender stereotypes and relations. If there is lack of social cohesion between communities, school reform is certain to generate discussion, conflict, and political resistance, and even supposedly technical changes, such as more rigorous certification standards for teachers, change of examination system and curriculum or the introduction of new pedagogical techniques, have political consequences.

Current situation in education, school education in particular, puts the population in remote and mountainous areas into particularly disadvantageous position. As a rule, schools are difficult to access, and both the conditions and the quality of education are inadequate.¹⁶ A

¹⁵ *Cnf.* e.g. UNICEF 2005

¹⁶ "[Millennium Development] Goal 2 in original wording relates to universal access to primary education. Owing to the Soviet legacy universal primary school enrolment in Georgia is achieved, but currently the education system is experiencing sharp deterioration. The scope and the quality of knowledge provided by the system falls short of the present day requirements due to scarcity and inadequate mechanisms of financing (budget expenditure/GDP2 ratio - 1.6-2.1%); cumbersome and centralised system of management; unavailability of curricula, textbooks and technical base; irrelevant standards; outdated system of teachers' retraining; subjective system of student's assessment and marking; no links to the labour market and higher and vocational education policies; etc. Consolidated education statistics are urgently needed to improve analysis of the sector. New targets that aim at improvement of quality and institutional set up of the education system are suggested." *Millennium Development Goals in Georgia*, Tbilisi 2004

dramatic decline in real state spending on education, including school education, is the most serious problem. This as well as a decline in real salaries for teachers and administrators, a reason for both increased corruption and declined quality. Current trends in development of higher education places the poor population of remote regions even in less favourable situation. Accessibility of the higher education, especially of higher quality, is increasingly associated with considerable expenses. There are no efficient systems that would help the talented young people to get free education and realize their capacities, if they are coming from afar and lack resources to live in a big town.

To what extent the impoverished schools lag behind the requirements of contemporary education can be judged e.g. by the condition of school buildings as in Adigeni, catastrophically low number of computers (to say nothing of their totally outdated condition) used in the school system.

Table 25. Number of computers owned by schools

	Number
Akhaltzikhe	33
Adigeni	11
Aspindza	9
Borjomi	8
Akhalkalaki	20
Ninotsminda	22
Total	103

Source: Ministry of Education

Correlation between years of education and income level found almost all over the world has been severely undermined in Georgia and Samtskhe-Javakheti is not an exception. It is not uncommon for well-educated individuals to be employed in unskilled labour or primitive commercial activity (street sellers in "budka"s that have proliferated in urban settlements and long highways, or shuttle traders) due to the difficulties of finding employment according to their formal speciality. At the same time proliferation of private universities and the pervasiveness of corruption in the state institutes of higher education undermined the value attached to diplomas.

Still, children tend to complete their school education at least, although at the upper classes there is a trend for some boys to leave. In all districts other than Ninotsminda and Adigeni, the share of boys in 10-11 classes decreases compared to the previous grades.

Table 26. Number of pupils in 2004/2005 school year

	1-4 classes (4 classes)			5-9 classes (5 classes)			10-11 classes (2 classes)			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Akhaltzikhe	1393 52.7%	1251 47.3%	2644 100%	2002 52.0%	1845 48.0%	3847 100%	534 45.9%	630 54.1%	1164 100%	3929 51.3%	3726 48.7%	7655 100%
Adigeni	669 53.2%	588 46.8%	1257 100%	900 53.0%	785 47.0%	1685 100%	250 54.4%	210 45.6%	460 100%	1812 53.3%	1590 46.7%	3402 100%
Aspindza	473 62.2%	288 37.8%	761 100%	730 63.5%	419 36.5%	1149 100%	255 60.4%	167 39.6%	422 100%	1458 62.5%	874 37.5%	2332 100%
Borjomi	793 49.8%	800 50.2%	1593 100%	1245 50.2%	1233 49.8%	2478 100%	293 43.8%	376 56.2%	669 100%	2331 49.2%	2409 50.8%	4740 100%
Akhalkalaki	1717 51.7%	1605 48.3%	3322 100%	2470 50.4%	2430 49.6%	4900 100%	896 49.7%	907 50.3%	1803 100%	5083 50.7%	4942 49.3%	10025 100%
Ninotsminda	1217 56.0%	955 44.0%	2172 100%	1734 52.3%	1583 47.7%	3317 100%	771 57.2%	578 42.8%	1349 100%	3722 54.4%	3116 45.6%	6838 100%
Total	6266	5483	11749	9074	8302	17376	2999	2868	5867	18339	16653	34992
%	53.3	46.7	100	52.2	47.8	100	51.1	48.9	100	52.4	47.6	100

Source: Ministry of Education

The explanation of the gender misbalance at the upper classes may refer to a number of factors. As many schoolteachers point out, boys often leave school to start working, or also in higher number than girls continue studies in specialised colleges, although it may also be

that for some reason boys are simply more motivated to quit, or freer to do so due to more personal independence. Summarily, during the period from October 2003 to October 2004 - 1197 students left schools, among these 459 from IX-XI classes.

Table 27. Reasons for leaving schools by students

	I-IV	V-VIII	IX-XI	Total
Transfer to other school	192	262	168	622
Transfer to evening school			34	34
Entry to vocational school			67	67
Special educational Institution			6	6
Illness	3	3		6
Death		2	1	3
Migration	128	127	93	348
Expulsion from school	3	16	4	23
Joining workforce		2	45	47
Marriage			41	41
Total	326	412	459	1197

Source: Ministry of Education

The number of educational institution in Samtskhe-Javakheti is quite high. In the region, there are 37 kindergartens, 264 schools and 18 private colleges and universities officially registered. In Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki operate the branches of the Tbilisi State University. At the same time, in Akhalkalaki there operate several higher education institutions, which are branches of Armenian universities, but they are not officially registered or licensed in Georgia, and thus have no public supervision over the curriculum and the quality of provided educational services.

There is also an option for school graduates to continue their study elsewhere – in Tbilisi, Yerevan, Moscow, or in rare cases in the West. According to anecdotal evidence, there may be more young males than females who move to study out of the region.

Table 28: Number of educational institutions in Samtskhe-Javakheti (2004)

District	Kindergarten	School	Private college/institute registered at tax office	Total
Akhalsikhe	9	45	10	65
Adigeni	7	44	0	52
Aspindza	2	23	0	24
Borjomi	13	32	6	52
Akhalkalaki	4	68	1	73
Ninotsminda	2	52	1	42
Total	37	264	18	308

Source: Regional Department of Education; Ministry of Education

Such affluence of educational institution reflects certain demand on the access to, if not on the quality of education. Still, there are noticeable gender differences in respective attitudes. Indeed, while 92.0% of respondents considered education as very important for a male (according 7.3% it was of medium importance, and according to 0.7% - not important), much less - 84.20% argued that education was very important for women (15.1% - of medium importance, 0.7% - not important). It was interesting to observe that the rural respondents have ascribed higher importance to education. Furthermore, in a hypothetical situation, provided a family had a daughter and a son, equally talented, while capable of giving university education to only one of them, 66.2% of respondents argued that in such case education should be given to the son, only 25.0% considered the daughter as an option, while 8.8% could not make the choice. However, in the similar situation if the daughter appeared more capable to study than the son, 82.9% would agree that an opportunity to continue education should be given to a daughter, (12.6% still chose the son, and 4.6% had no answer).

There is no guarantee that gender issues will be prominent in educational reform. Whilst strategies to improve access usually result in greater gender equity, there is a lack of strategic gender analysis and mainstreaming in sector planning, management and institutional processes. Gender inequalities in enrolment in post-basic education have seemingly increased across the region. However, paradoxically, the direction and the profile of the emerging gender differentials is somewhat different from those observed in many

other developing countries. In urban setting, girls are not at disadvantage; rather striking is the high, and rising, disadvantage of boys in secondary, and especially higher, education, as well as the absolute domination of women among teachers everywhere. The extent to which educational policies have addressed gender issues in education is mixed.

The survey data in general corroborates official statistical data, by showing that the majority of respondents (47.0%) have finished 11 years of schooling, 24.1% had a university degree, 17.1% - vocational education, 6.2% were students, 2.9% had received only 4, and 2.6% - 8 years of schooling. It is only too natural that there is higher concentration of people with a university degree in urban settlements than in rural areas: 48.7% of urban and 22.9% of rural respondents have claimed incomplete or full (bachelor level and above) high education.

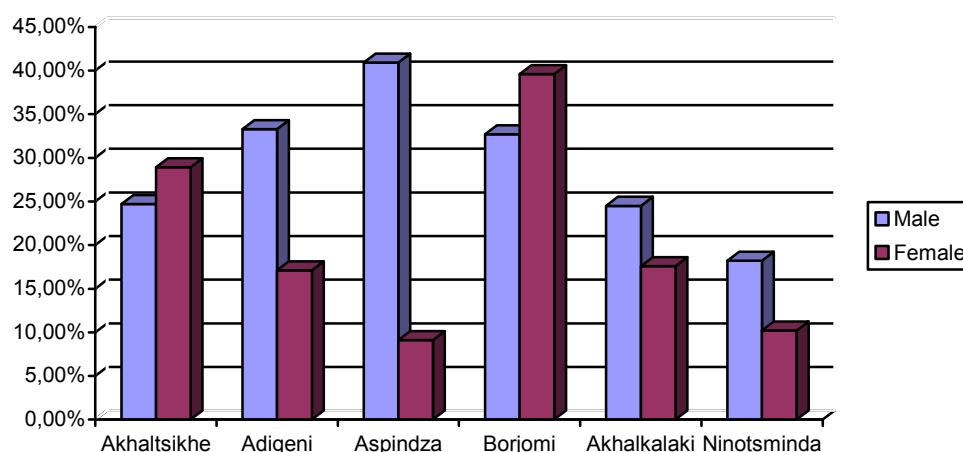


Figure 13. Male and female respondents with university degree across districts (%)

As can be seen from the Figure 13, in 4 districts out of the six, men with university degree outnumber women. The difference is especially great in Aspindza. In the more urbanised districts of Borjomi and Akhaltsikhe more women than men among our respondents had a university degree.

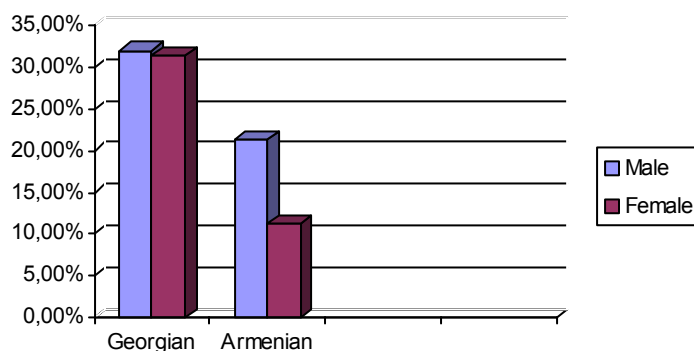


Figure 14. University degrees among male and female respondents of Georgian and Armenian ethnicity

Ethnicity is an important factor influencing the educational profile of the population, as well as the related gender differences. Much higher proportion of ethnic Georgians, as compared to Armenians (31.7% and 16.1%, respectively) claim to have a university degree. Still, such data disaggregated by ethnicity should be interpreted with caution, as there are a number of other factors at play here. Ethnic Armenians, to much greater extent than Georgians, tend to leave the region to study abroad and subsequently stay there, primarily in Armenia or Russia, while according to anecdotal evidence emigration among educated Armenians is also much higher. Gender difference regarding educational level among Georgian sample is negligible, while among Armenians about twice more men than women have a university degree, which may also be linked to both disadvantage of girls and the higher emigration of

educated Armenian males (although additional research is needed to corroborate this evidence).

There are numerous problems linked to the education at Armenian schools.¹⁷ There are no textbooks in Armenian available locally, and all over Georgia Armenian schools are using some textbooks brought in from Armenia. From 50,000 to 60,000 books arrive each year under a program agreed between the Georgian and Armenian ministries of education, and the books used by pupils in more than one hundred Armenian schools in Georgia are the same as those studied in Armenia. This necessarily creates problems regarding the standardization of curriculum in the country, on the other hand pushes the graduates of the Armenian (and Russian, quite popular in the region) schools out of the country if they are willing to continue education. The more so that the knowledge of the Georgian language is very poor in the areas compactly populated by Armenians, in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts.

One of the interesting experiences we had during our study was linked to meeting school children (8th grade) in the process of writing essays on their future, as to how they see themselves and the general situation around them in 10 years. Six schools were chosen for the exercise, one in each of the districts. Pupils at all schools fulfilled the task with pleasure; many at the end of their writings even expressed their gratitude for giving them opportunity to express their wishes and thoughts, which also shows how much they strive for an opportunity to express themselves.

But alarmingly unsatisfactory was the purely technical aspect of meeting the task, i.e. how low were the skills of writing, demonstrated by the children through the poor knowledge of syntax and orthography, but more disturbingly, through inability to organise thoughts and ideas in consistent and structured way.

Difference between the writings of the girls and the boys was not very visible, unlike the difference between the regions. The essays of pupils in Adigeni and Aspindza were the most patriotic, devoting the biggest part of the texts to the aspired and hoped developments in the country, and seeing their own fate through the prism of country events; also showing much trust and expectations related to the figure of president Saakashvili. The most personal, individualistic, were the essays of pupils in Borjomi, girls often demonstrating higher degree of freedom and independence; quite a number of them projected that they would live alone, own cars and marry late. The Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki pupils at two Armenian schools discussed Georgia as a homeland, while stressing being Armenian and the ties to Armenia as very important. Also, the writings of Armenian girls reflected more subordinate position of women in that part of the region, and often the negative attitude to the tradition of early marriage, expectedly preventing them from following professional development.

In general, the essays more or less followed the same structure. Pupils began with the statements of their age in ten years followed by the discussion of their career and professional achievements. Most of the pupils underscored the importance of education and expressed the desire that they could learn more at school, and the studies to be more demanding. Many discussed marriage, being in love, their current families. Almost everyone expressed desire to see other places, going to foreign countries, mostly as tourists. The situation in the country was then discussed, pointing to the wishes of its integrity, peace, economic development and no need to work abroad, expressing the wishes of Georgia to flourish, and instead of receiving assistance helping other countries. Pupils discussed poor infrastructure and the desire to live in a clean environment, stable electricity and water supply, expressed preferences regarding their future possessions, this being mainly a car and a house. Understanding of the parent's condition induced by poverty was reflected in many writings, e.g. a boy pointed that in 10 years he wished to live in the country, where parents will be able to buy their children candies. Many pointed that they will help the poor and orphans when they have an opportunity to do so. It is also noteworthy that many spoke about the natural environment and need to preserve it.

It was surprising to see that many pupils have not chosen their future career path, some even pointed that did not think about this. Others named very diverse and not easily

¹⁷ *Cnf.* e.g., Ilona Kazarian, "Hard Lessons: Armenian schools in Georgia struggle to retain teachers and pupils" Armenia Week, 5 May 2004

combinable careers. Generally speaking, Armenian pupils of Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki were much more concrete and earthly in their plans, many of them even considered names for their future children. Girls in these two districts seemed much more concerned with their future families and marriages, than pupils in other districts.

Closely linked with education, another area where ethnicity plays a great role is the knowledge of languages, as Armenians in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda seldom speak Georgian, while Georgians there, but rarely elsewhere, would know Armenian. According to the survey data, the language known by the highest proportion of surveyed population is Russian. 85.8% reported at least understanding Russian, 75.2% could speak Georgian and 62.3% - Armenian. At the same time, the overwhelming majority (91.5%) of respondents considered knowing the state language, Georgian, to be obligatory for all the citizens (4.9% argued that language knowledge should be obligatory only for state employees, and according to 3.6% it should not be obligatory to anyone). 82.3% of ethnic Armenian respondents considered the knowledge of Georgian to be a must. It is characteristic, that much higher proportion of males, obviously representing ethnic minorities, knows Georgian and Russian, while Georgian males tend more frequently to speak Armenian, than ethnic Georgian females.

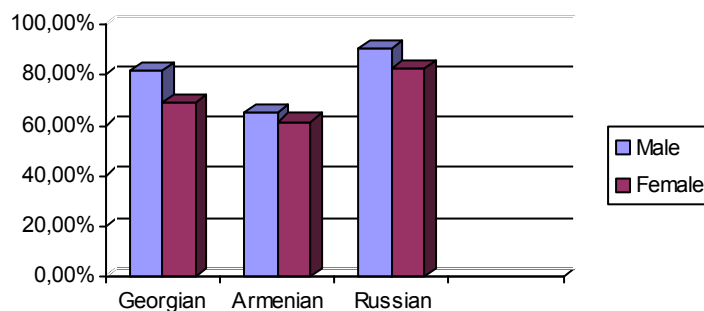


Figure 15. Command of languages among male and female respondents (%)

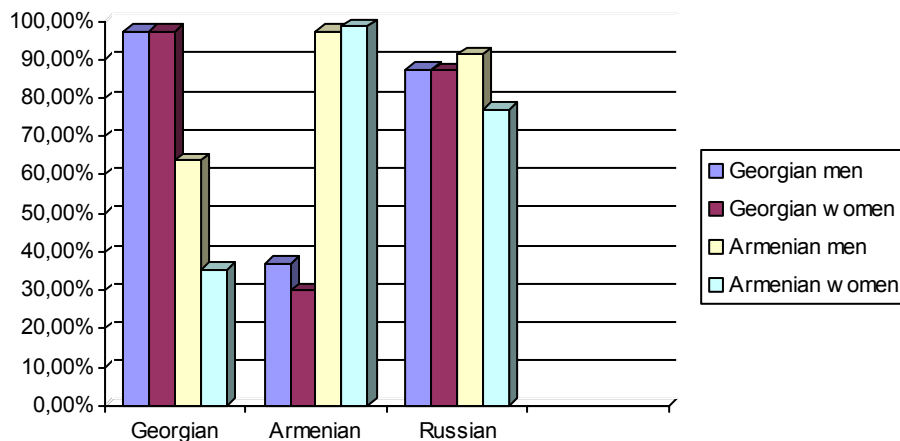


Figure 16. Command of languages by ethnicity and sex of the respondents

In Akhaltsikhe, approximately the same proportion of ethnic Armenian respondents reported knowledge of Georgian as knowledge of Armenian by Georgian respondents. However, the respective difference is high in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda regions, as in these districts proportionally much more Georgians speak prevalent Armenian than Armenians know Georgian.

7. Health and Gender

Perhaps the best-known adverse development accompanying the prolonged transition period has been the sharp and unanticipated deterioration in life expectancy, with a significant and long-lasting downfall of it particularly in the case of the male population.

Most of the "excess" deaths in Georgia appear to be due to cardiovascular and circulatory diseases, accidents and violence. All these are strongly associated with the strains of transition and the associated incidence of alcohol abuse, emotional distress, violence and suicide. These factors were abetted by the insufficiently diversified and balanced nutrition and unhealthy life-styles. Gradual worsening of health condition without being restored (malnutrition, stress situations, inadequate prophylactics) lowers labour productivity and stamina. It is especially alarming that the level of tobacco consumption has reached catastrophic figures. The studies show that in the country up to two thirds of all males and about one fifth of females smoke, predominantly low quality tobacco, and the figures especially among girls are rising. The number of pregnant smokers in the age group of 17-25 reached 28%. People begin smoking at younger age, increasing therefore the malicious impact of it. Consumption structure of food products by the population is imperfect: only 7-20% of food energy consumed on average comes on meat, fish and dairy products, as compared to 65%-85% is the share of bread products. Such proportion hardly relates to a healthy diet.⁴

The sharp increase in mortality has hit young and middle-aged men harder than women. Female advantage in life expectancy in the country is quite high, as women significantly outlive men, and the respective gap has drastically increased with transition. The trend for men to die earlier is likely to have important consequences for both family structure and the welfare of women and children. But it is not solely mortality rate that is different for men and women, health is actually the area where such differences emerge both in a natural way due to physiological specificities, but also due to different impact of social factors and stressors in the first place have on men and women.

Table 29. Dynamics of the number of death in 1998-2003.

District	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Akhaltzikhe	422	375	430	459	473	541
Adigeni	146	216	196	173	173	147
Aspindza	107	89	75	107	107	127
Borjomi	430	391	441	334	418	452
Akhalkalaki	302	276	240	302	292	353
Ninotsminda	214	217	229	261	290	265
Total	1,621	1,564	1,611	1,636	1,753	1,885

Source: S-J UNDP; Regional Department of Labour, Health and Social Security

Table 30. Death rate per 1000 of population

District	2002	2003
Akhaltzikhe	10.2	11.7
Adigeni	8.3	7.1
Aspindza	8.2	9.8
Borjomi	12.1	13.1
Akhalkalaki	4.8	5.8
Ninotsminda	8.4	7.7
Average	8.4	9.1

The most pronounced indicators of the health status of the population are the death rate and morbidity. Deterioration of health, first of all and in most dramatic ways is reflected in the death rate. In Samyskhe-Javakheti instances of death increased in 2003 as compared to the previous year, and the same trend was evident in all districts except Adigeni and Ninotsminda. Table 30 demonstrates that the death rate is the highest in Borjomi and lowest in Akhalkalaki, which is partly explained by the respective age structure of the population, Borjomi the oldest and Akhalkalaki the youngest population.

Apart of the general mortality rates, infant mortality is another important social characteristic of the state of the healthcare system of a country. It is disturbingly high for Georgia overall¹⁸, and the Table 31 serves for comparison with the Table 32 showing the regional data:

Table 31. Infant mortality in Georgia¹⁹

⁴ Healthcare – Georgia 2001, Statistical Guide, Tbilisi, 2002

¹⁸ UNICEF 2005

¹⁹ Drawn from the "Millennium Development Goals in Georgia." Tbilisi, 2004 UNDP

Indicator	2000	2001	2002	2003
Under-five mortality rate ¹	24.9	25.5	26.0	26.4 ⁴
Infant mortality rate ²	22.6	22.9	23.8	24.2 ⁴
Proportion of children immunised against measles: ³				
13 month-olds	N/A	57.2	66.0	79.7
Under 2 years	94.8	99	99.1	98.6

Source: State Department of Statistics

¹ Under-five mortality rate is calculated by dividing the number of under-five deaths for a specific year by the number of live births in the same year and multiplying the resultant number by 1000.

² Infant mortality rate is calculated by dividing the number of under-one deaths for a specific year by the number of live births in the same year and multiplying the resultant number by 1000.

³ National Center for Disease Control and Medical Statistics

⁴ SDS estimates

Table 32. Number of deaths of infants (up to 1 year of age), 2003

District	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Akhaltzikhe	16	4	4	0	3	2	5	34
Adigeni	5	*	2	*	3	1	2	13
Aspindza	*	2	1	*	*	0	0	3
Borjomi	15	8	4	3	4	1	2	37
Akhalkalaki	6	2	6	*	2	2	4	22
Ninotsminda	6	6	5	3	2	4	0	26
Total	48	22	22	6	14	10	13	135

* no information

Source: S-J UNDP; S-J Regional Department of Labour, Health and Social Security.

The 'mortality crisis' has its roots in the traditional attitude that saw health status as the product of the state's health care system, with the result that individuals and communities lacked a sense of responsibility for, information about, and capacity to promote good health. Health is one of the areas where gender dimension is intertwined with the enormously complex multitude of factors.²⁰ The transition has weakened the state health system without strengthening individual capacity for becoming responsible and informed about behaviours that maintain and improve health. Now, due to developing market processes, the shortages of medicines remain only in remote areas, while international assistance has greatly helped to solve the vaccination problem, but the affordability of medicines for the impoverished population remains problematic.

The extraordinary increase in mortality, particularly due to cardiovascular diseases, accompanied the introduction of economic reforms and a sharp increase in unemployment. Increasing empirical evidence suggests that economic instability, growing poverty and rising unemployment were the main factors behind the increase in premature deaths, mainly leading to deteriorated health condition but also through effect on risk-taking behaviour and violence. It is well known that as poverty increases, so does the incidence of disease as health status is affected by a number of different factors and many of them are linked to poverty. Among such factors are chronic exposure to stress, life style, accessibility and quality of medical services, prophylactic measures and public awareness, which are part of the state policy of healthcare.

²⁰ "Establishing the effects of transition on the health status of the population and its differential effect on men and women is not a simple task, because pre-transition government health statistics were often purposefully altered, and remain so in some countries. But many sources confirm that the consequences of transition have been significant across the region, and that they have had clear regional patterns in the ways in which they have affected men and women. The beginning of the decade was characterized by two major concerns: the "mortality crisis" and the sharp increase in mental illness and risk-taking behavior. Although women were not immune from these problems, men were disproportionately affected. For many countries, the evidence suggests that life expectancy began to improve in the second part of the decade and that the incidence of mental disorders also peaked around that time. The rising concern in the second part of the decade has been the effect of transition on women's reproductive health." Pierella Paci. "Gender in Transition". World Bank. 2002

The breakdown in health care, with unavailability of medicines and vaccinations during early 1990s, has had a detrimental impact on the health of the general population in Georgia at large and in Samtskhe-Javakheti. As stated above, one reason for increased number of diseases lies in unhealthy life style and lack of basic knowledge in this area, but another issue is also the lack of accessibility, and of capabilities, for early diagnostics and prophylaxis. Poverty and resource crunch has been the main reason for unhealthy life style, malnutrition and belated and insufficient treatment. Almost every second households is endangered by a drastic deterioration of health condition of its member, which requires hospitalisation or long-term treatment.

The health care system in Georgia as a whole was severely disrupted as a result of political crises and the economic collapse, while another major factor in the decline of health services was the drastic reduction in public monies to fund a system that was largely dependent on public resources. Between 1990–1994 real per capita public expenditures on health declined catastrophically.²¹ Subsequently, the combination of the economic recession, combined with the government's limited ability to generate revenue and a consistently low priority afforded to the health sector has resulted in low and declining resource allocations to health care. As a result, the general health-related situation in Georgia has worsened significantly if compared with the pre-independence years. Since 1996, the country is faced with the task of implementing reform, as its system was unsustainable, and the government had to certain extent privatised health care. However, these incomplete reforms have rather added problems to many vulnerable groups, particularly those people who would not fall into the nosologic categories entitled to receive support, but who nonetheless became vulnerable due to the high costs of treatment. Such patients would in particular include those with chronic diabetes, asthma and/or coronary disease, i.e. illnesses, which require constant medication and care as well as one-off payments for surgery.

The healthcare system continues to be plagued by excessive personnel of medical doctors against the lack of qualified nurses, catastrophic degradation of facilities, under-utilisation of health services and the overall lack of resources. Medical staff are all severely under paid, resulting in charges being made for services, which officially should be free. Another legacy of the past is the inadequacy and unreliability of statistical and epidemiological information, which makes health monitoring and health care planning almost impossible to carry out. Share of the government expenditures on healthcare does not exceed one fifth of total expenditures and the biggest portion of healthcare expenditures is utilized for treatment rather than for prevention. The share of the government expenditures on prophylactic medicine, the development of which is the most efficient sphere of capital investment in healthcare is less than one sixth of the total government spending on healthcare. Despite of increased frequency of the diseases, the hospital beds are not occupied to expected extent, because due to material need, potential patients prefer to have self-treatment or in the extreme case, use specialized, dispensary and diagnostics services outside primary healthcare system.

The radical healthcare reform process is underway since mid 1990s. This process, guided primarily by the World Bank (Health Care Rehabilitation Project), was intended to encompass all aspects of the health-care sector and to transform the clumsy and centralised healthcare system into one that was directed towards quality of treatment, improved access, efficiency, and a strengthened focus on primary healthcare. A number of services including preventive ones that were previously provided for free were cut dramatically. Health sector reform fundamentally changed the ways healthcare was financed, by moving toward programme-based financing, and payroll-tax-based social insurance schemes, while central government allocations for the poor and the vulnerable were to take place through Basic Benefit Package designed to serve reimbursement purposes as well as a guarantee mechanism for universal delivery of essential services. The role of the government would shift from being in charge of all aspects of health financing and delivery, - to regulation, financing of prioritised public health programmes and a basic package of clinical services, as well as policy making, while the non-governmental sector would provide the services. It was

²¹ Gamkrelidze Amiran, Rifat Atun, George Gotsadze and Laura MacLehose (eds. Laura MacLehose and Martin McKee). *Health Care Systems in Transition: 2002, Georgia*. European Observatory on Health Care Systems, 2002

recognized that healthcare system should be reoriented from curative, high-end, tertiary hospital and specialist based care, towards preventive services delivered in the community, and the need for restructuring health care towards modern, dependable and effective primary care services. Moving to more effective primary care was set as an explicit policy priority, which implied developing independent outpatient facilities, outpatient hospital departments, and medical first aid and midwifery posts. These facilities would target the provision of primary care treatment and prevention to patients, ensuring accessibility to primary care services, creating a link between outpatient and inpatient hospital care. The primary health care units were expected to provide the population with health education, maternal and child health care, immunization, prevention, treatment of diseases and injuries, and to ensure patients access to essential drugs. Other related priority areas included issues such as overall improvement of maternal and child health, reduction of morbidity and mortality caused by cardiovascular diseases, improvement of prevention, detection and treatment of oncological diseases, reduction of traumatism, reduction and prevention of communicable and diseases (HIV in the first place), mental health, health promotion and establishment of healthy lifestyle and environmental health.

Despite these measures, to date the performance of the healthcare system is disappointing, even if some positive changes are apparent. The system continues to face profound challenges to equity and solidarity in health and there are concerns that the reforms have both not made headway in improving the health situation and may even have contributed to further health inequalities. All health programs are still severely under-funded. Aggregate allocations from public and insurance sources are too low to substitute for out-of-pocket payments, while the latter account for an estimated 4/5 of national health expenditure. An estimated 9% of the population consumes 40% of care, as the poorest 8% overexert themselves financially, borrowing money and selling assets to pay for health services.²² Overall, the population remains uninformed about the basic principles of health reforms and their entitlements and therefore do not support them. The rush to insurance-based medicine was more a rush away from the previous system than a well-thought-out policy direction, as the country possesses next to no institutional capacity to provide insurance-based health care en masse. To achieve universal coverage, or at least ensure that the majority of the population has access to basic health services, government interventions are still essential. In addition, there is a need of educating the public on reforms, which would allow to fundamentally change the nature of the reform process from a top-down centralized process to one that is demand-driven and collaborative. Notwithstanding some efforts to establish modern primary care services, essential problems that impede their development remain to great extent unresolved.²³

Accessing proper healthcare treatment is a particularly difficult task in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Available facilities are in poor state, and the districts are in different situation each. Summarily, there are 43 health facilities registered in the region, all of them in private/public ownership: among these are 14 hospitals, 8 medical units – a combination of polyclinics and ambulatories, 12 ambulatories, 5 dispensers, 2 emergencies, a women's consultation and a dental clinic. There are also 25 drugstores operating in the region. Also, a number of unregistered facilities operate in the region, predominantly in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda. While e.g. in Akhaltsikhe district there operate fifteen healthcare institutions, including three hospitals; no such institution exists in Akhalkalaki district that is registered by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Protection. Residents of Akhalkalaki can go to the hospital in adjacent Ninotsminda, one at the Russian military base locally, or further on to Akhaltsikhe. Still, in the case of serious health problems, locals prefer to go to Armenia, where, not far from the Georgian-Armenian border, there functions an Italian hospital known for high standards of service.

Health facilities of the region suffer from bad infrastructure, many hospitals do not have proper water supply and functioning sewerage system the road to hospital in Akhaltsikhe is in a horrible condition. Hospitals lack such basic diagnostic instrument as echoscopes, and

²² Alexander Telyukov, Mary Paterson. *Strategizing Health Reforms and Donor Assistance in Georgia*. USAID/Georgia, Tbilisi 2003; A. Gamkrelidze, R. Atun, G. Gotsadze and L. MacLehose. *Health Care Systems in Transition: Georgia*. European Observatory on Health Care Systems, 2002

²³ See, e.g. Venekamp Dineke. *Development of a Regional Master plan for the Primary Health Care system in Kakheti Region*. European Commission Delegation in Georgia. Tbilisi, January 2004; Telyukov Alexander, Mary Paterson. *Strategizing Health Reforms and Donor Assistance in Georgia*. USAID/Georgia, Tbilisi 2003

the population have to rely on rare private initiatives and western-sponsored NGOs to undergo testing.

Out of 437 medical doctors working in the region, only 360 or 82.4% are officially certified. The rest 17.6% are all doctors operating in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts - 44 out of 61 doctors in Akhalkalaki, and 25 out of 33 in Ninotsminda, do not possess certificates allowing medical practice, mostly due to their inability to take exam in Georgian, and therefore there is no state regulation of the quality of services provided.

Morbidity next to death rate is a potent and most widely used indicator of population's health. Gender differences first of all are reflected in different demands towards the health care, due to gender specificities of many diseases. Unfortunately it appeared impossible to obtain reliable gender-disaggregated information on morbidity, although naturally there are evident differences in gender-specific health problems, and in some cases information on gender differences was still available.

Reproductive health is the area where female issues dominate. There is certain evidence that across the country some reproductive indicators have deteriorated during the last few years, and maternal mortality rates may have worsened overall. Total fertility rates have experienced a dramatic decline in mid-1990s, but have slightly recovered since. Abortion rates also have declined, but remain high, and contraceptive prevalence rates have increased along with a rise in modern contraceptive use.

On the other hand statistics suggest that the quality of reproductive health services have either stagnated or deteriorated, both in quality and quantity, even if there are some new signs of hope. For example, (a) the percentage of women that received some sort prenatal care has declined or at least not improved; (b) the percentage of pregnant women with at-birth anaemia has increased; (c) although the percentage of births attended by trained personnel has remained high, the definition of "trained personnel" became blurred (and the quality of the data is questionable, given the existence of large refugee and displaced populations and the decline in hospital use); (d) the decline in the number of midwives exceed the decline in number of births; (e) the proportion of women reporting complications from abortions remains high and this is generally problematic, as women routinely utilize abortion as a method of contraception (although at a declining rate); and (f) very high infant mortality rates as well as the number of low birth weight births cause concern.²⁴

In 2003, morbidity in Samtskhe-Javakheti constituted 22,480 per 100,000 of population, well below the average for Georgia of 30,580. The tendency is present in respect of all diseases. Although this data cannot be interpreted with confidence as a better health condition of the region's population, as can be accounted to the low accessibility to the health service, due to the distance, poverty or quality of services. There are also some inaccuracies in morbidity statistics that are related to significant number of unregistered cases, particularly when the patients are diagnosed out of the region, e.g. with cancer (frequently in Tbilisi or Yerevan from Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda)

Table 33. Diseases per 100,000 of population 2003

Morbidity	Samtskhe-Javakheti	Georgia
Infection and parasitic	975.2	1002.8
Lang tuberculosis	69.5	115.8
Sexually transmitted diseases (STD)*		
Malignant tumour / cancer	518.2	637.8
Endocrine system	2617.4	2870.6
Cardiovascular system	4861.4	5374.8
Respiratory	3274.2	7027.6
Digestive*		
Urinary and sex	645.4	1389.0
Traumas	890.6	785.6

*Information not available

Source: National Centre of Disease Control and Medical Statistics. Tbilisi, 2004

²⁴ UNICEF 2005

As already said above, gender differences in morbidity emerge not only because of physiological gender specificities, but also due to different social factors and stressors in the first place. It may be linked to such risk factors as smoking (TB, lung cancer) or addiction to alcohol (liver problems), or drugs.

One big human killer is cancer, and its occurrence is quite gender-specific. If all types of cancer are accounted, there is relatively little gender difference, but there are dramatic differences in regard to the cancer location. The most widespread among women are genital, breast and digestion tract cancers; among males it would be the is digestion, respiratory and urinary systems. According to the available statistical data (cases per 100,000 of population), in the case of males the predominant cancer types were (in 2003) - lip, mouth, and throat (104 men vs. 35 women), digesting (634 men vs. 465 women), respiratory and chest (788 men vs. 121 women), urinal (203 men - 52 women). Cancer types that are more frequent among women include those affecting breast (999 women vs. 8 men), and genitals (709 women against 237 men).

Table 34. Cases of the first diagnosed cancer in 2003 by gender in districts

	Akhaltsikhe		Adigeni		Aspindza		Borjomi		Akhalkalaki		Ninotsminda		Region	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Lip, mouth	1	1			1				3	1			5	2
Digestion system	6	10	1	1	1		15	8	7	3	4		34	22
Respiratory and lung	10	5	1				5		8		3		27	5
Bones and joints							1						1	
Melanoma and skin		6	1	1				2				1	1	10
Mezotelial and soft tissues														
Breast		14		3		6		8		1		2		34
Female genital		9		3		2		17		4		1		36
Male genital	1				3		2				1		7	
Urinary system	1				1		5	1	6	1			13	2
Eyes, brain	1				1		1		1		1	1	5	1
Thyroid and endocrine glands		1					1	2						
Blood, lymphoid tissue							2	1	1	1		1	3	3
Total	20	46	3	8	7	8	32	39	26	11	9	6	97	118
%													45.1	54.9
% of population													0.1	0.1

Source: National Centre of Disease Control and Medical Statistics

Another disease, which is closely linked to the socio-economic development, is tuberculosis (TB). Its prevalence is much higher among men than women. The same is true regarding the sexually transmitted diseases (STD).

Table 35. Cases of tuberculosis among men and women by districts (2003)

District	Lung tuberculosis		Extra lung tuberculosis		All tuberculosis		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	Total
Akhaltsikhe	12	11	7	2	19	13	32
Adigeni	16	10	8	3	24	13	37
Aspindza	29	7	8	2	37	9	46
Borjomi	8	0	4	1	12	1	13
Akhalkalaki	19	3	3	1	22	4	26
Ninotsminda	24	4	6	2	30	6	36
Total	108	35	36	11	144	46	190
%					75.8	24.2	100
% of population					0.14	0.04	0.09

Source: National Centre of Disease Control and Medical Statistics

Table 36. Cases of first diagnosed STD among men and women by districts (2003)

District	M	F	Total
Akhalsikhe	26	-	26
Adigeni*			
Aspindza*			
Borjomi	26	36	62
Akhalkalaki	28	2	30
Ninotsminda	34	8	42
Total	114	46	160
%	71.2	28.8	100
% of population of four districts	0.14	0.05	0.08

* Information not available

Source: National Centre of Disease Control and Medical Statistics

Despite of the overall bad situation of the health in the region, subjective perception of health in Samtskhe-Javakheti presents, however, a relatively brighter picture. 49.6% of respondents in our survey evaluated their health as normal, 41.1% as good and only 9.3% as bad. Males as a rule estimated their health more positively – 47.1% of male respondents claimed their health to be good, while for women it made 35.2% (Chi-square =10.73, df=2, $p<.005$), which probably reflects not the better health status of men, but more their lack of sensitivity to health issues.

On the other hand as many as 81.8% of respondents have not gone for a vacation or travel during the past 3 years. More women (21.3%) than men (14.9%) have enjoyed a vacation (Chi-square =4.93, df=1, $p<.05$), they tend to take children along.

8. Gender in Family Life

The society in Georgia places an extremely high value on family, and it presses women in particular to get married. The majority of families are extended, comprising several generations, in urban areas this to certain extent strengthened by the scarcity of accommodation options and the childcare facilities. The Caucasian tradition calls for a woman to leave her place of residence and move to with her husband's parental house upon marriage. Recently, there has been a move toward nuclear, rather than extended families, and except in rural areas with more traditional family patterns, this trend is developing. The number of marriages has declined in recent years, which is attributed to the severe economic conditions rather than the decline of the social role of family. Birth rates have also declined in recent years, and an average family in Georgia has now two children. However, in many rural areas, and in Samtskhe-Javakheti in particular, families still tend to be larger.

Within the traditional society of Samtskhe-Javakheti, family constitutes one of the leading values of the local culture. Representatives of several generations often live in one household, with the duties of men and women remaining strictly divided. Both men and women continue to follow traditional gender role patterns and specific behaviours, as well as family roles. So, the principle role of women is raising children and running the household and that of a man is to be a breadwinner.

The changes that took place in last decade reflected however badly on men, eroding their power base, decreasing their self-esteem as a result of difficulties of professional achievement and income generation. Elasticity and more readiness to adjust to new realities, as well as concentration of women's self image on connectedness rather than on independence and achievement as is in case of men, seemingly put women in better position. Women's contribution to the family budget has resulted in significant changes in traditional gender dynamics within the household, although male dominance is still surviving and the male role of "provider" retains fundamental importance in families; it is an essential aspect of male identity and sense of fulfilment. Patriarchal family structure remains the dominant paradigm. Men head the family and control decision-making, including the distribution of the family budget, regardless of whether they are the primary breadwinners or not. It is also the widespread view of both men and women that male dominance within the family is natural.

One of the most explicit aspects of gender differentiation in family life relates to dealing with the household chores. Tables 37,38 and 39 demonstrate quite clear-cut link of gender with different kinds of household chores. Females predominantly have a much more diversified domestic tasks (17 from our list of 28) than men (only 8). Both genders are jointly involved on regular basis in three types of activities, i.e. keeping contacts with kin, keeping contacts with neighbours and harvesting.

Table 37. Household chores done by women and men %

No	Task	Males	Females	Both	Nobody	Total
1	Cooking	0.9	96.3	0.3	2.6	100
2	Cleaning house	0.4	95.9	0.9	2.9	100
3	Washing up dishes	0.4	95.9	0.9	2.9	100
4	Washing	0.7	98.7	0.6	3.0	100
5	Buying food	16.1	74.3	7.0	3.1	100
6	Buying cloths	6.0	63.7	27.1	3.1	100
7	Buying cleaning chemicals	4.6	88.7	3.3	3.4	100
8	Dealing with firewood	82.6	4.9	4.7	7.9	100
9	Making dung fuel	16.6	18.0	1.7	63.7	100
10	Looking after poultry	5.0	51.7	6.7	36.6	100
11	Looking after animals	21.7	30.3	10.9	37.1	100
12	Mowing and gathering hay	53.3	3.3	4.9	38.6	100
13	Sowing	41.1	7.6	21.3	30.0	100
14	Weeding	33.0	11.6	25.3	30.1	100
15	Harvesting	22.3	7.6	41.4	28.7	100
16	Selling agricultural produce	33.6	8.4	16.6	41.4	100
17	Fetching water	17.3	19.1	5.7	57.9	100
18	Producing milk products	1.0	61.9		37.1	100
19	Caring for elderly or sick	1.0	44.0	0.4	54.6	100
20	Looking after children at home	0.4	51.1	0.9	47.6	100
21	Taking out children	2.1	39.1	1.4	57.3	100
22	Assisting a child with school lessons	2.4	42.0	1.0	54.6	100
23	Attending parents' school meetings	3.9	43.1	1.0	52.0	100
24	Building, repairing a house	59.4	6.0	7.3	27.3	100
25	Mending apparel	75.4	6.6	6.9	11.1	100
26	Keeping contacts with neighbours	10.1	27.9	57.7	4.3	100
27	Generating income	60.9	16.7	18.4	4.0	100
28	Keeping contacts with kin	7.1	12.7	76.7	3.4	100

Table 38. Rank order of predominantly female chores

Rank	Chore	%
1	Washing	98.7
2	Cooking	96.3
3.5	Cleaning house	95.9
3.5	Washing up dishes	95.9
5	Buying things for cleaning	88.7
6	Buying food	74.3
7	Buying cloths	63.7
8	Making milk products	61.9
9	Looking after poultry	51.7
10	Looking after children	51.1
11	Looking after elderly and sick	44.0
12	Attending meetings at school	43.1
13	Assisting children in studies	42.0
14	Taking out children	39.1
15	Looking after animals	30.3
16	Making dung fuel	18.0
17	Fetching water	19.1

Table 39 . Rank order of predominantly male chores

Rank	Chore	%
1	Firewood cutting	82.6
2	Mending things at home	75.4
3	Generating income	60.9
4	Building, repairing house	59.4
5	Mowing and gathering hay	53.3
6	Sowing	41.1
7	Selling agricultural produce	33.6
8	Weeding	33.0

In families where there are small children, disruption of public services such as kindergartens create a significant additional burden for women. The best situation with the availability of kindergartens is in Borjomi with its relatively well-developed social infrastructure, while Ninotsminda and then Akhalkalaki are in the worst situation.

Table 40. Number of kindergartens and accommodated children by districts

	Number of kindergartens	Number of children per district	% of the population in districts
Akhalsikhe	9	456	0.99
Adigeni	7	188	0.91
Aspindza	2	130	1.0
Borjomi	13	510	1.48
Akhalkalaki	4	168	0.27
Ninotsminda	2	30	0.08
Total	37	1482	

Source: Regional Department of Schools

The existing misbalance regarding the burden of domestic duties favouring men may be gradually changing due to the reconsideration of the economic status of many economically active women. According to 82.1% of respondents, in the case when a woman works and is busy with her job, while her husband is unemployed, the man should do the main part of housekeeping (11.7% disagreed, and 6.2% has no opinion). Accordingly, if a man was busy at his job, 81.7% of respondents would expect the woman to take care of her husband's duties, even if typically done by men (13.4% disagreed, 4.9% had no answer).²⁵ Again, as many as 79.3% of men and 84.8% of women would expect a husband to help his wife with the traditionally female chores (Chi square = 6.4, df= 2, p<.05). There was no statistical difference observed between genders regarding women coping with the traditionally male tasks.

One more important aspect of family life, in a sense a crucial one, is related to decision-making, and therefore, to the distribution of power in a family and to personal independence.

Respondents in our survey were asked to indicate, who of family members made final decisions on the listed issues concerning the family

Table 41. Decision-making in a family

Item	Males	Females	Both	Number
Purchase of assets/durables	199 26.2%	220 29.0%	339 44.8%	758 100%
Everyday expenditures	173 23.1%	300 40.0%	276 36.9%	749 100%
Participation in community activities by family members	242 37.3%	69 10.7%	337 52.0%	648 100%
Participation if family members in social events (attendance of weddings, etc)	157 22.6%	85 12.3%	451 65.1%	693 100%

²⁵ Assessing the share of how much each member of couple does is not easy as it depends on who is asked, with a tendency to men overestimate their contribution and women to underestimate it. (Galinsky, Bond and Friedman, 1993. 1992 National survey of employed women and men). Sharing childcare by husbands is associated with the well-being of the wives, reducing the incidence of depression among women (Ross and Mirowsky, 1988).

Respondents pointed to the fact that with regard to decisions as to what to buy, who will participate in community or a social event, in the majority of families such decision was made jointly, while regarding daily expenditures it was women who were the decision-makers.

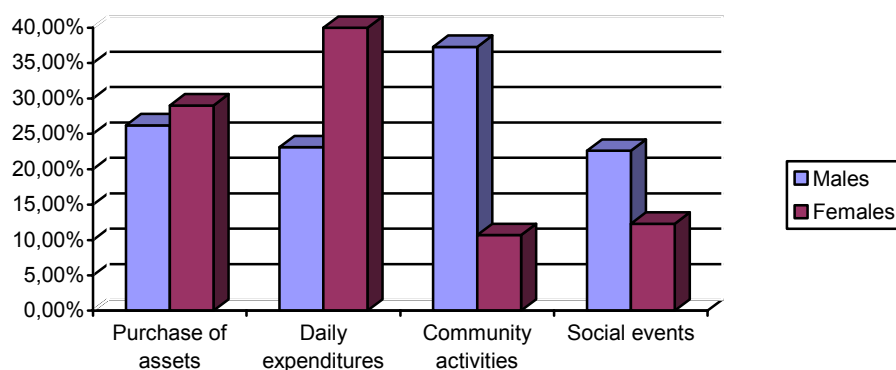


Figure 17. Decision-making in a family – family affairs (%)

Even more important decisions relate to the choice of a spouse or a friend, and here too gender difference, like with the case of community events, is evident. In all cases, sons enjoy much more independence, than daughters, in making decisions that have direct impact upon their life.

Table 42. Decision-making in a family – career and choice of partners (%)

No	Item	Himself	Herself	Other males	Other females	Both parents	Number
1	Career of the offspring	91 15.3	77 13.0	163 27.4	110 18.5	153 25.8	594 100
4	Whom should daughter marry		196 46.9	85 20.3	62 14.9	75 17.9	418 100
5	Whom should son marry	235 52.7		79 17.7	59 13.2	73 16.4	446 100
6	Who should be daughter's friends		255 57.6	69 15.6	68 15.3	51 11.5	443 100
7	Who should be son's friends	294 62.3		67 14.2	61 12.9	50 10.6	472 100

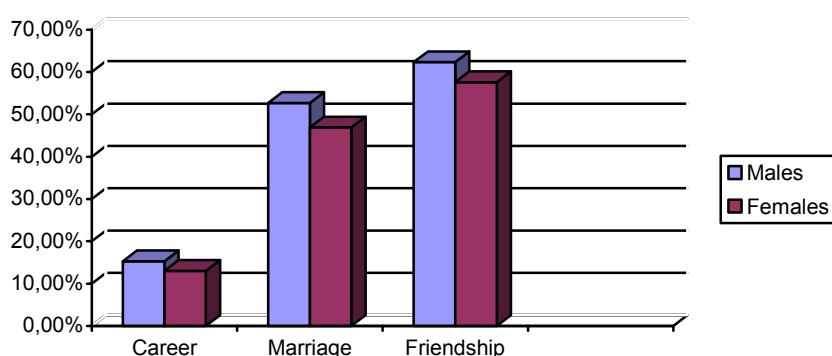


Figure 18. Decision-making in a family – career and choice of partners by male and female off-springs

Having clear vision of the future can be considered as one of the main determinants of the success in life. As discussed above, essays by 8-graders demonstrated the fuzziness of their views on own future in regard to the career. While describing in detail the types and models of the cars they will have in 10 years time, the number and even the names of the children they will have, or the countries they will visit, children remained very vague as to what career path they will follow.

Building a family is another important areas of decision-making. Across the region, the most independence in the choice of a spouse granted to young inhabitants of Borjomi, followed by the youth in Akhalkalaki, while the least choice is given to the inhabitants of Adigeni.

The analysis of essays written by 8-graders revealed that the writings of girls at Armenian schools (Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda) reflected more subordinate position of women in that area and the tradition of early marriage, preventing girls from following professional development. More girls of Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki schools, than girls from Georgian schools in four other districts, discussed their marriage and future families. At the same time, pupils of Armenian schools were much more exact and concrete in their plans, demonstrating stronger stereotypes, pragmatism and adherence to traditional value.

Another important dimension relates to going out of home. Respondents were asked to mark in the list, where men would alone go without women, and vice versa, where women would go without men.

Table 42. Going out (%)

Place	Women alone	Men alone	No need/ together
Herding cattle	3.9	67.3	28.8
Meadow / mowing	2.7	48.3	49.0
Land plot	7.6	26.4	66.0
Forest	1.7	44.3	54.0
Spring / water	52.3	8.4	39.3
Market	42.4	6.0	51.6
Shop	44.1	2.7	53.2
School/ kindergarten	67.6	0.7	31.7
Church	38.9	2.7	58.4
Local government	7.7	37.6	54.7
Public gathering place outdoors ("birzha")	2.7	63.9	33.4
Neighbours	38.3	10.0	51.7
Restaurant/café	1.7	54.1	44.2
Cinema/Theatre	3.9	29.0	67.1
Sports event/sports facility	1.0	37.1	61.9

Movements of the family members, particularly in the evening time, also make a gender-sensitive issue. So, 55.1% of respondents pointed that they needed permission from their family if they wanted to go out after dark, while only 44.9% did not consult with the family. Much higher proportion of women, 68.3%, against 41.5% of men, need to take permission from family members (Chi Square 49.35, df1, $p < 0.001$). It is not surprising that there is a difference by settlement type (Chi Square 3.99, df1, $p < 0.05$), as more people in villages (57.6%), characterised by more patriarchal family structure, need a permission to go out, than in towns (49.25).

Particularly strong gender differences exist in the area of social restrictions regulating sexual behaviour. As many as 96.7% of respondents expressed their opinion that women should preserve virginity until marriage (only 1.4% disagreed with this and 1.9% had no opinion). In comparison, only 47.1% thought that men should not have sexual intercourse before marriage, while 41.5% did not agree (11.4% - no opinion). Similar differences are linked to adultery and divorce: In the case of a husband's adultery - according to 36.3% of respondents, - wife would be right to seek divorce, while according to the majority of 43.2% divorce should not be sought by the wife, and 20.5% had no opinion (There is certain difference between genders regarding this issue - 32.9% of men and 39.6% of women support divorce, Chi square = 11.3, df= 2, $p < 0.005$). However, in case of a wife's adultery the situation is strikingly different, with the absolute majority (82.7%) asserting that the husband should divorce the adulterous wife, while according to as little as 5.4% he should not, with 11.9% uncertain.

Whatever differences regarding sexual freedom, both genders are united in their preference for love as a basis for marriage. Indeed, the majority (78.3%) thinks that marriage by love is happier than marriage by arrangement (7.3%), with women being slightly less romantic: 82.8% of men and 73.9% of women support marriage by love as more happy (Chi square = 8.9, df= 2, $p < 0.05$), even they are less sure (76.2% and 68.0%, respectively) that such

marriage will be stable. Both men and women should be allowed to choose their future spouse on basis of love (88.3% and 87.1%, respectively). Reality seems to lag behind the ideals, as only 53.9% of respondents indicated that they had married by love, while 22.7% - by arrangement (23.4% were not married or did not answer the question). It is interesting to observe that the admitted share of arranged marriages increases at the age of those getting married. Among those who married before 26 – only 27.7% married by arrangement, among those who married between 27-30 - 33.3% did so, and among those who married after 30 already 44.8% relied on arrangement to choose a spouse. Mean age of marriage of respondents appeared to be 22.8 (SD 5.0). Men tend to marry later $M=24.5$ (SD 4.7), than women $M=21.2$ (SD 4.8). 65.3% married before 26 years of age, 11.2% in the age range of 27-30 years and 4.7% after 30.

Having children is also decided in a balanced manner. Future parents should jointly take decision about having children, as maintained by as many as 89.4% of respondents, while opposite opinion was equally divided – as the same 4.4% of respondents gave this prerogative to husbands and to wives.

In case of decisions related to future career age seems to be a more important factor than gender, and the youth in general have somewhat restricted say. Only 60.2% of respondents agreed that a son should himself decide which career to choose, 30.9% believed that it was parents who should jointly do this, according to 6.9% it was father's responsibility, and 2.0% maintained a mother should make the decision. Along the same line, in case of a daughter - 55.2% stated that the daughter herself should decide her career, 37.2% - that parents should do this, according to 5.7% - father and to 1.9% - mother should make the decision.

Sons are the preferred future members of a family. When asked, whom a family would want if they could have only one child, 69.9% of respondents expressed their opinion that it would be preferable to have a boy (22.6% did not agree and 7.5% had no opinion). As in almost every area, rural respondents are much more conservative - 79.1% of villagers and 47.0% of urbanites argued that if there was such situation any family should better have a son (Chi square = 73.34, $df=2$, $p<.001$).

Intra-family communication is an important aspect of family life. A number of questions tapped the targets of self-disclosure, i.e. persons with whom respondents talked about their problems concerning health, employment, studies, career, financial difficulties or other important issues. It appeared that while the nuclear family is at the core of communication, still almost every twentieth respondent keeps his/her problems to oneself, indicating to widespread communicational difficulties. Depending upon the issue, partners in dialogue may be different. Respondents preferred to talk about health problems mostly with their spouses, mothers and daughters, while preferred to discuss employment problems, future, and financial problems with spouses and with both parents.

Table 44. Rank order of disclosure targets (external topics)

	Target	Number	%
1	Spouse	1672	64.7
2	Mother	330	12.8
3	Father	168	6.5
4	Nobody	130	5.0
5	Son	74	2.9
6	Daughter	56	2.2
7	Friend	53	2.1
8	Brother	45	1.7
9	Other	23	0.9
10	Sister	22	0.8
11	Neighbour	10	0.4
	Total	2583	100

Apart of spouses, who in majority cases remains the main target of disclosure, respondents tend to disclose their concerns to the persons of the same sex. This tendency was more apparent among women (72.6%) than among men (56.3%). In case of family problems, not disclosing concerns at all, is even more widespread. Spouses are in general the preferred confidants, but when there is an arguments with a spouse, respondents either

keep silence or speak with mothers. In case of the disagreement with children or in-laws, there are more options available, talking with a spouse, talking to nobody and to mothers are the most frequent cases. If spouses are excluded, the majority of confidants belong again to the same sex – so, 78.9% of women and 53.0% of men discuss family conflicts with the same sex persons. Men show lower rate as mothers, not fathers, are preferred advisers on family matters.

Table 45. Rank order of disclosure targets on family issues

	Target	Number	%
1	Spouse	593	56.4
2	Nobody	241	22.9
3	Mother	77	7.3
4	Son	36	3.4
5	Daughter	35	3.4
6	Friend	16	1.5
7	Neighbour	16	1.5
8	Father	13	1.2
9	Other	10	1.0
10	Brother	9	0.9
11	Sister	5	0.5
	Total	1051	100

Not all topics are disclosed with equal readiness. The least discussed concerns related to disagreements with spouses, while the most willingly respondents would talk about their life plans.

Table 46. Rank order of topics by the share of those who did not discuss them

Rank	Topic	%
1	Disagreement with a spouse	42.2
2	Disagreement with in-laws	16.4
3	Disagreement with children	6.5
4	Problems with employment/studies	6.5
5	Problems with money	5.6
6	Problems with health	4.8
7	Future plans	3.0

It is not surprising, that members of nuclear families are those on whom respondents would rely the most. Indeed, when asked to name three persons on whom respondents would rely in case of hardship, the most often named persons were husbands, mothers, wives, sons, fathers and daughters (16.9%, 14.2%, 13.8%, 12.9%, 12.4%, and 7.5%, respectively). In general, there is a tendency of more disclosure and openness toward women, wives and mothers in particular, but as for reliance in the situation of emergency, it is higher toward men (54.0%) than women (46.0%). This is obviously related to the fact, that while women are more involved in family affairs and probably more compassionate, they lack power and resources that are a decisive factor in such circumstances.

9. Violence-Related Abuse

There are four dimensions of vulnerability with important gender dimension that are receiving increasing attention both in Georgia and internationally: human trafficking, prostitution, domestic violence and juvenile crime. Although only domestic violence is currently widespread in Samtskhe-Javakheti, with expected decrease of isolation the society should be ready for coping with these problems.

Although it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics, available evidence suggests that a considerable increase in trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation occurred during the 1990s. Moreover, government involvement in combating human trafficking has been relatively weak. Therefore, significant increase in the number of women involved in human trafficking in the country is an important dimension of increased vulnerability of the population, but fortunately is less observed as yet in the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti. There are also many instances of male trafficking, particularly of labour migrants transiting

through the country. Though Georgia recently passed legislation criminalizing human trafficking, the government currently provides no rehabilitation services to victims, and endemic corruption among government officials poses serious challenges to the effectiveness of the proposed new legislation.

Finally, evidence suggests an increase in juvenile crime and juvenile delinquency since independence, although currently the situation is not as bad as in mid-1990s. The registered juvenile crime rates in the country have nearly doubled during the post-independence period. While breaking the law remains predominantly a male phenomenon, both the number and share of girls coming into conflict with the law are rising in the country. The increased involvement of girls has been observed, however, for other risk-taking behaviours, such as substance abuse.

Trafficking, domestic violence, prostitution and juvenile crime are social scourges, and they entail terrible human costs for their victims. For these reasons alone, the expected increases in these aberrant behaviours in the region needs to take urgent preventive steps to combat them and the factors that cause them. If this is not happening, - trafficking, violence and youth crime will also have clear adverse implications for efficiency and economic growth. Trafficking deprives countries of precious human capital, as the women who are its victims tend to have relatively high levels of education; it is also an important component of economically and socially corrosive systems of corruption and illegal activities. Domestic violence has important effects on the productivity of the individuals involved and on their health status. And juvenile crime imposes both heavy costs on society and considerable private penalties on the youngsters involved, in terms of foregone accumulation of human capital and capacity to participate in productive activities later in life.

Gender-based violence is just beginning to be recognized in Georgia, primarily due to pressure from the international community. Violence may be narrowly defined, from the legal viewpoint, as the unlawful use of physical force by an individual against others. A broader approach defines violence as a behaviour, which harms others, either physically or emotionally. Besides culture, male power in a considerable extent rests on economic and physical strength and is only too often exercised through violence. Violence is one of the mechanisms in the subordination of women by men.

Subject to considerable data limitations, the sparse studies and the few survey results available seem to indicate that gender-based violence has increased during the transition. This is a major problem, and represents one of the most important concerns with respect to women's human rights and health. It takes many forms — physical, sexual, emotional and economic— and can occur in different settings, including the home, the community, and the workplace. It is often perpetrated over long periods of time and by a known person or a partner. Men also experience violence, it mostly takes the form of homicides and attacks by strangers, but violence against women has important and distinctive features and consequences. Few attempts have been made to adopt new national legislation intended to clarify the definition of violence and allow women to be protected by court orders. However, the main problem is related to little willingness among women to report on gender-related, and particularly family based, violence, due to various taboos and related social stigma. Traditionally, speaking about the violence in family or sexual abuse is not considered appropriate.

If trafficking or prostitution are not yet a widespread problems in Samtskhe-Javakheti, domestic violence seem to be a common malady.²⁶

Official crime statistics totally neglect domestic violence, and in general gender-related violence is strongly under-registered. If one looks at official statistical data, this becomes evident - most common offences in the region according to 2003 year statistics were: theft - 37.2%, illegal logging 20.7%, related to drugs 11.2%, to arms 9.0%, while all other offences comprised 21.9%. Crimes against women are not separately registered but according to experts are not frequent, although home violence goes practically unrecorded, in spite of significant anecdotal evidence. Cases of rape are claimed to have fallen lately,

²⁶ *Cnf.* "No domestic violence legislation explicitly protects women from abuse by family members, such as their husbands. According to the experts interviewed, marital rape is not recognized among the general public as a crime. Domestic violence remains a hidden phenomenon in Georgia, with the majority of Georgians denying its existence." CEDAW 2003

and were never frequent in the region. Women themselves are virtually out of crime – 1 criminal act was recorded in 2003 and another in 2004 (theft of a mobile phone). It may be worth noting that there are significantly more crimes registered in Borjomi and Akhaltsikhe, than in other districts, and these more frequently happen during the summer tourist season, especially in Borjomi.

Our survey tried to tackle the sensitive issue of domestic violence. Obtained answers are very disturbing. Many respondents indicated instances of family violence. Interviewers would not ask direct questions about respondents' own experience, in order to make the issue less sensitive and hence obtain more sincere answers, therefore they asked instead about the knowledge of violence in other families. From our data it is difficult to say whether respondents were more reluctant to talk about men beating women than parents abusing children, but still the general picture is evident. As many as 16.8% of respondents (14.4% of men and 19.2% of women) indicated that they know families where husbands beat wives. Even more respondents, - 30.7% (27.9% of men and 33.5% of women), pointed that they knew families where fathers beat children, and 52.0% (50.0% of men and 54.0% of women) knew families where mothers beat children. More women than men indicated they knew about cases of violence. It is interesting to observe that while women are themselves frequent victims of domestic violence, they too are more frequent abusers of child's rights.

Even in the case of repeated domestic violence against women, the majority of respondents (50.1% - 56.0% of men and 44.5% of women, Chi square = 30.7, df= 2, $p < .05$) asserted that the victimised woman should not complain the fact to police against 26.7% who argued that she should, while as many as 23.1% expressed no opinion, seemingly supportive of the first opinion. Still, the majority (59.9% - 54.1% of men and 65.5% of women, Chi square = 19.5, df= 2, $p < .001$) agreed to the opinion that in the case of repeatedly conducted violence against a wife she should divorce (20.1% disagreed, 20.0% had no opinion).

Still no more than 76.4% considered beating a wife as never justified, while 15.9% believed it sometime justified (7.7% did not answer). There was significant gender difference (Chi square = 20.2, df= 2, $p < .001$) as 22.2% of men against 9.9% of women admitted beating as sometimes justified. However, disturbingly, more respondents expressed tolerance towards beating children: 37.4% considered this as sometimes justified, while according to 58.0% it was never justified (4.6% had expressed no opinion). There is gender difference (Chi square = 7.3, df= 2, $p < .05$), paradoxically enough, even though women are believed to beat children more often, 42.2% of men against 32.9% of women admitted beating to be sometimes justified. Another surprise was that more urban (45.8%) than rural (33.9%) respondents considered as appropriate to sometimes beat a child (Chi square = 10.09, df= 2, $p < .05$).

However, the most disturbing is the attitude toward the victims of forced intercourse or rape. So, the relative majority - 40.3% of respondents have expressed their belief that in the case of rape, often it is women who also should be blamed. (33.3% did not think so, 26.4% had no opinion). Naturally, there is significant gender difference: 50.0% of men and 30.9% of women think that women should be blamed in such situation (Chi square = 27.1, df= 2, $p < .001$). However, surprisingly, more urban respondents (57.7%) than rural (33.1%) were ready to blame women (Chi square = 36.47, df= 2, $p < .001$).

A closely related issue is that of abducting brides. Because it is not unequivocally illegal under the current legal code, such cases are often resolved through family negotiations, and typically end in marriage being imposed upon the woman due to the negative impact on the young woman's reputation. Respondents were asked what a woman should do after being abducted, if she does not want to marry the perpetrator. According to 28.3% of respondents, such woman should marry the man if sexual intercourse actually took place, according to 24.6% - she should marry him in any case, while 47.1% argued that she should not marry. No gender difference was observed regarding this issue, however more than twice as many rural respondents than urban (29.8% against 12.0%) argued that the abducted women should marry the perpetrator in any case (Chi square = 29.24, df= 2, $p < .001$).

10. Gender Differences in Attitudes, Values and Concerns

While gender equality is an overall general priority in any democratic society, gender-sensitive policies should take existing differences into account. Some innate sex differences explain some aspect of gender-related reality, others are explained by the long history of male-dominated society, but whatever reasons and causes, this reality needs to be described and taken into account by policy makers and social engineers.

Stereotyping of girls and boys begins very early, as it is supported by the upbringing in a family and further strengthened at educational institutions and by the community. So, e.g. a gender analysis of the first year school textbooks demonstrated that up to two thirds of all human figures in illustrations are male. Boys and girls are routinely characterised by different psychological qualities. Boys are presented in the textbook as competent, aggressive, patriotic and friendly, although lazy and not accurate; while girls are depicted as kind, caring but shallow²⁷. That such gender-specific opinions are deeply rooted was further corroborated by discussions with schoolteachers – the absolute majority of them would argue that boys in general are more intelligent and talented but lazy, while girls more diligent but mediocre.

Talking about the gender and gender equality with people, one often encounters resistance, on the part of both men and women, toward picking this issue, declaring that this is not a problem here. The rationale for such a reaction may be twofold: first of all the urgency and high pressure of existing social problems common both for women and men – poverty, that needs to be tackled before moving to secondary social issues, that are distracting from the priority of battling poverty. The second is the reaction to the interpretation of the gender issue as it was conceptualised in the relatively recent Soviet past - proclaimed gender equality portrayed by the women construction workers and bulldozer drivers; women were urged (and pushed by the need to earn supplementing meagre family incomes) to go out join the workforce, to consider the upbringing of children as secondary to building communism and pursuing the professional career. This role was much associated with extraneous ideology, and retaining gender distinctiveness in family relations is perceived as resistance to foreign ideology (originally Russian, now Western) and keeping traditional family. According to the results of the survey carried out in 10 regions of Georgia and presented in CEDAW report²⁸, 52% of respondents think that the movement of women for the equality with men in society and for the defence of the own rights is unacceptable in Georgia, due to the traditions of family life. Such opinion has even more supporters in Samtskhe-Javakheti with its more traditional ways of life.

Among the urban centres in the region Borjomi, while second after Akhaltsikhe by the number of its population, stands out with the most developed urban environment, although in many respects can be considered in a worst situation in the region. Higher proportion of Borjomi inhabitants than of any other districts perceive themselves as poor, despite the fact that their declared monetary income is higher than in other districts. However, being located along a major highway connecting it with the capital Tbilisi and therefore less isolated, this got translated at least among the younger generation of 8-graders into more gender egalitarian attitudes. Pupils' essays of a Borjomi school demonstrated more gender equality, freedom of expression, striving for independence and orientation towards future career than essays from any other town of the region.

Women and men are not only different, they maintain as well different viewpoints and the worldview. First of all, men and women ascribe different importance to different aspects of life, and different things make them happy or disappointed. When respondents were asked to rate the importance for men and women of the different aspects of life, they provided if not the real disposition of values, but at least their understanding of existing differences.

²⁷ We thank Lela Khomeriki for this information.

²⁸ CEDAW 2003

Table 47. Rank order of importance of different aspects of life for men and women

Aspect	For men %	Rank	For women %	Rank
Money	97.3	5	91.7	4
Health	99.6	1	99.0	1
Employment	99.0	2.5	80.3	9
House	98.0	4	92.9	3
Family	99.0	2.5	98.3	2
Relatives	88.5	7	87.6	5
Friends	87.7	8	82.0	7
Neighbours	81.6	10	80.8	8
Independence	91.5	6	67.4	10
Religion	85.1	9	85.1	6
Politics	58.2	11	37.1	11

Naturally enough, the ranking was very similar when respondents were asked how they themselves assess the importance of these aspects of life. Health was considered as important by the highest share of both men and women, while family occupied the honourable second position for both genders. While for many issues the rank of various aspects of life as rated by men and women is similar, there are important differences as well. Such a difference is observed in the ranking of Employment (rank is 2.5 for men and 9 for women), which is by far more important for men, and of Religion (9th and 6th for men and women respectively), the latter being more important for women. Ranking of all other aspects of life by men and women does not differ more than by one rank.

Such hierarchy of values obviously closely correlates with the dominant concerns and worries of respondents. One year after the dramatic events of November 2003, public attitudes underwent many changes both in the assessment of the past and in the anticipation of future developments. Political events continue to occupy minds, and their interpretation and reassessment is still taking place, however, the concerns of everyday life remain in the centre of attention. These dominant thoughts are predominantly those related to economic well-being and to health. Indeed, Economic problems are evidently most urgent for respondents, next comes health, followed by the problems of accommodation and shelter. It is interesting to note also the high score of the lack of possibility of entertainment and leisure activities. The issue of family relationships seem to be the most secure, as characteristic for a traditional society. During the survey, respondents were asked to choose three most burning problems concerning them personally, from the list of 19.

Higher proportion of women appeared to be concerned with health, whether their own or of their children, while men were more concerned with their unemployment, lack of money and scarcity of land.

Table 48. Rank order of problems chosen by males and females %

Rank	Problem	Males	Females	Both	Difference	Total
1	Lack of money	86.3	81.2	83.7	5.1	83.7
2	Own unemployment	59.3	41.9	50.4	17.4	50.4
3	Own health	23.5	34.8	29.3	-11.3	29.3
4	Condition of dwelling or lack of it	15.4	18.3	16.9	-2.9	16.9
5	Children's health	9.0	18.5	13.9	-9.3	13.9
6	Other, unspecified	10.5	16.3	13.4	-5.8	13.4
7	Lack of entertainment	12.5	9.6	11.0	2.9	11.0
8	Scarcity of land	12.5	8.1	10.3	4.4	10.3
9	Children's education	8.1	10.7	9.4	-2.6	9.4
10	Insufficient education	8.1	5.9	7.0	2.2	7.0
11	Unemployment of a spouse	5.2	7.9	6.6	-2.7	6.6
12	Unemployment of children	4.4	7.9	6.6	-3.5	6.1
13	Health of a spouse	5.8	5.1	5.4	0.7	5.4
14	Families of children	2.9	3.7	3.3	-0.8	3.3
15	Relationships with family members	1.2	2.2	1.7	-1.0	1.7
16	Relationships with children	1.7	1.4	1.6	0.3	1.6
17	Drinking of a spouse	0.3	0.6	0.4	-0.3	0.4
18	Relationship with a spouse	0	0.6	0.3	-0.6	0.3
19	Drinking of a child	0	0	0	0	0

Naturally problems vary with the respondent's age, with the biggest difference related to the lack of entertainment. This problem was chosen by 34.9% of the young, 7.4% of the middle-aged and 1.2% of the elderly respondents. The second problem highly important for the young was unemployment (56.6% of young, 53.5% of middle aged and 38.3% of elderly). Concerns with insufficiency of education also decreases with the age (14.7% of young, 6.2% of middle aged and 3.0% of elderly). The most concerned with the scarcity of land are the middle aged respondents (12.4%) compared to 7.8% of elderly and 7.0% of young respondents. Health problems increase with age (concerning 20.2% of the young, 25.7% of the middle aged and 44.9% of the elderly).

Further, respondents were requested to choose from the listed 12 problems - 3 most solvent to the place where they lived.

Table 49. Local problems across districts %

#	Problem	Akhal-tsikhe	Adigeni	Aspindza	Borjomi	Akhal-kalaki	Nino-tsminda	Total
1	Power supply	85.8	85.9	53.3	59.3	84.5	63.5	75.6
2	Roads	62.6	69.0	60.0	43.5	70.4	60.4	62.0
3	Drinking water	55.5	59.2	60.0	86.1	19.4	54.8	50.1
4	Quality health care	23.2	26.8	26.7	23.1	23.3	74.8	32.3
5	Quality education	2.6	2.8	8.9	11.1	33.5	19.1	16.1
6	Irrigation	14.2	26.8	51.1	0	13.6	1.7	13.4
7	Possibility to watch TV	25.8	16.9	6.7	1.9	16.5	1.7	13.3
8	Natural gas supply	15.5	5.6	13.3	6.5	15.5	16.5	13.1
9	Logging	5.8	7.0	11.1	58.3	1.0	0	12.0
10	Other	0	0	0	2.8	9.7	1.7	3.6
11	Telephone	1.3	0	8.9	0.9	1.5	0	1.4
12	Criminality	0	0	0	0.9	0	0	0.1

Power supply remains the major problem, followed by the poor condition of roads and the difficulties with potable water supply. Criminality is not in fact considered to be a problem for the region, unlike many other regions of the country. Still, problems differ from district to district. Unstable power supply is the most burning issue in Akhaltsikhe and Adigeni districts, while it is poor condition of roads in Akhalkalaki and Adigeni, drinking water in Borjomi, quality health care and education in Ninotsminda, irrigation in Aspindza, possibility to watch TV in Akhaltsikhe, problems with cooking gas supply in Ninotsminda, Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe, excessive logging in Borjomi, poor telephone connections in Aspindza and high criminality in Borjomi.

Table 50. Three main problems by districts %

District	Problem 1	Problem 2	Problem 3
Akhaltsikhe	Power supply 85.8	Roads 62.6	Drinking water 55.5
Adigeni	Power supply 85.9	Roads 69.0	Drinking water 59.2
Aspindza	Roads 60.0	Drinking water 60.0	Power supply 53.3
Borjomi	Drinking water 86.1	Power supply 59.3	Logging 58.3
Akhalkalaki	Power supply 84.5	Roads 70.4	Quality education 33.5
Ninotsminda	Quality health care 74.8	Power supply 63.5	Roads 60.4

While opinions differed greatly in identifying main problems, as soon as a more concrete question was asked, the answers became more coherent. Respondents have expressed as to what should be done first of all in order to improve the situation in their locality. Water supply, employment and physical infrastructure unequivocally topped the agenda, followed by concern with accessibility of quality school education.

Table 51. Three priority areas that need to be improved, by districts (%)

District	Problem 1	Problem 2	Problem 3
Akhaltzikhe	Employment 18.7	Roads 16.3	Power supply 13.1
Adigeni	Roads 38.7	Drinking water 33.3	Other 5.4
Aspindza	Drinking water 34.8	Roads 20.4	Irrigation 20.4
Borjomi	Drinking water 20.8	Employment 17.7	Reconstruction of parks, sports halls and clubs 13.0
Akhalkalaki	Education 50.0	Power supply 26.2	Employment 6.5
Ninotsminda	Employment 34.0	Drinking water 31.1	Roads 6.8 Improvement in life conditions 6.8

Table 52. Rank order of local problems to be solved

Rank	Problem	%
1	Drinking water	15.3
2	Employment	14.9
3	Roads	13.4
4	Power supply	12.7
5	Schools/education	12.7
6	Other	5.5
7	Reconstruction of parks, sports halls and clubs	4.5
8	Developing/improving local infrastructure	2.8
9	TV reception	2.5
10	Improvement of life conditions	2.5
11	Gas supply	1.9
12	Good governance	1.8
13	Irrigation	1.6
14	Development of tourism	1.6
15	Pensions and salaries	1.5
16	Employment of youth	1.5
17	Ecological problems	1.2
18	Development of agriculture	0.7
19	Free health service	0.7
20	Possibilities for business development	0.7
	Total	100

The absolute majority of respondents (70.0%) expressed their opinion that men and women should have equal rights in every area of public and private life (25.9% do not agree, and 4.1% - no opinion). More women (75.3%) than men (64.5%) strived for equality (Chi square = 9.7, $df=2$, $p<.05$). Moreover, 52.2% argued that everything possible should be done in order to reach the gender equality, while 28.8% were against any changes in this respect, 13.3% believed there already was gender equality, and 5.7% offered no opinion. Still, according to 53.8% there is no gender equality in Georgia and women are discriminated. 41.8% considered that there is basic equality, according to 1.1% - it is men who are discriminated, and 3.3% had no opinion. At the same time, more men (48.1%) than women (35.7%) have stated that men and women are equal in Georgia ($Chi-square=11.38$, $df=3$, $p<.05$).

Quite egalitarian attitude was displayed towards the hypothetical choice of a president for the country. 36.4% pointed, that in case of equal skills and abilities, they would prefer a male candidate for the country's presidency, 35.0% preferred a female candidate, while 28.6% could not decide. Women tend to prefer a female president (38.5%) compared to 31.3% of men ($Chi-square=7.94$, $df=2$, $p<.05$).

Attitudes toward the gender equality are closely related to the general concept of gender differences as referring to individual qualities. Indeed, respondents have assessed differently human qualities in men and women, when asked to provide their opinion on each such quality, whether it characterised better one of the sexes or both equally.

Table 53. Female and male features

Feature	More males	More females	Both
Understanding	17.6	10.2	72.2
Courage	50.4	10.7	38.9
Prudence	29.3	17.8	52.9
Independence	47.9	8.0	44.1
Loyalty	6.3	35.0	58.7
Moderation	9.8	30.3	59.9
Empathy/compassion	5.9	25.4	68.7
Cooperativeness	12.9	9.1	78
Restraint	11.6	37.9	50.5
Friendliness	13.6	6.2	80.2
Determination	33.0	12.3	54.7
Tolerance	6.8	48.4	44.8
Patience	6.9	54.5	38.6
Ambition	21.3	11.3	67.4
Patriotism	11.7	3.6	84.7
Warmth	3.3	29.1	67.3
Kindness	4.6	14.6	80.8
Love	3.7	13.9	82.4
Social skills	13.6	9.0	77.4
Intellect	19.4	4.8	75.4

Courage, independence and determination are considered to be features characterising males. Tolerance, restraint, loyalty and moderation are considered to be more female qualities. Patriotism, love, kindness equally characterize both genders. Still, male and female respondents disagreed in ascribing some of the qualities. Men also appeared to be more optimistic (60.9%) as compared to female (52.7%) respondents (Chi-square =4.81, df=1, $p<.05$). They are also more self-confident, although the proportion of persons who has a high self-esteem is quite high for both sexes. 75.6% of respondents were quite self-confident, medium confidence was revealed by 23.8% and only 0.6 indicated that they had low self-confidence. Men were indeed by far more confident (83.1%) than woman (68.2%) (Chi-square =2256, df=2, $p<.001$).

11. Gender and Public Participation

Gender roles are not delineated in public life as clearly as they are in family. Men and women alike routinely claim to value gender equality at work and in public arena. However, the existing practice shows that this principle is far from being realized. Rigid gender stereotypes dictate social behaviour, limiting women's public participation.

Participation of women in public life is much less than of men. Only very few women can be found in elected bodies and in high administrative positions. While women comprise more than half of the region's population, there is no female MP elected from the region, only 39 women are to be found among 445 *sakrebulo* members and only 4 out of 82 are head *sakrebulo*s.

Taken together men more than women participate in community life, although social activities are gender specific. School meetings are predominantly attended by women, Sakrebulo or community meetings by men, while attendance to social events is more egalitarian.

More than 70 NGOs are dedicated to advancing women's economic, social and political status throughout the country, to significant extent thanks to the initiative and support of international agencies. The growth of civil society has been a major attribute of the transition era, and its continued development and sophistication will serve to increase government accountability in improving the lives of its citizens, both women and men. The conceptual frameworks involved in the change are related to the ideological trends of feminist movements worldwide that are imported to Georgia by various international actors or through information flows.

Indeed, the issue of gender is becoming more popular, and attracts attention. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had watched on TV, listened a broadcast, read in

printed media or themselves discussed the gender equality issue during the past 8 months. 29.0% indicated that they watched a TV programme on gender issues, 25.6% discussed the issue with friends, 23.6% read in printed press, 22.3% got information from other sources, 5.4% listened to it on the radio, and 3.9% talked about the gender equality at their work place.

This corresponds to the general pattern of information flows. In order to test this, respondents were asked to choose 3 information sources out of the listed 7, which they most often used for obtaining the information about the developments in the country. Television, newspapers and neighbours were most often used as information sources.

Table 54. Rank order of the sources of information

Rank	Source	%
1	Television	91.6
2	Newspapers	51.6
3	Neighbours	41.6
4	Family members	35.0
5	Radio	21.4
6	Co-workers	12.1
7	Other sources	5.6

Apart of media, the civil society is believed to be another important source of external information. Samtskhe-Javakheti claims also significant number of SCOs. According to the data gathered by UNDP²⁹ 236 Non-Government organizations (NGOs) are registered in the region, even if not all of them active. Out of these 96 are domiciled in Akhaltsikhe, 34 in Adigeni, 21 in Aspindza, 42 in Borjomi, 32 in Akhalkalaki and 11 in Ninotsminda. Overall, about one quarter of NGOs are led and administered by women, however, the absolute majority of such organisations operate in Akhaltsikhe. Out of the whole number of NGOs, only six are focusing their activities around the gender sphere, or rather specifically on women's issues. These are: The Union of Democrat Women of Samtskhe-Javakheti (headed by Marine Modebadze), Gea (headed by Dona Beridze and Khatuna Jinjveladze), Bridge of Trust (headed by Natia Khutsishvili and Mamuka Kurtanidze) - in Akhaltsikhe; For Women's Rights (headed by Manana Orjonikidze), Dia - Girl Scouts organization (headed by Lia Mamulashvili) in Borjomi; and, Paros (headed by Narine Ginosian) in Ninotsminda.

The increase in the number of NGOs since 1999 is obviously associated with activities of international organizations in the region, who in considered supporting or even initiating the creation of CSOs as their priority. Two thirds of all NGOs are quite new; they were registered in 2001-2002 or later. Particular attention during the last couple of years is paid to the creation and functioning of the community based organisations (CBOs), that are considered as preferable partners in many infrastructure rehabilitation projects funded by the World Bank and the USAID, and recently also by British Petroleum, the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline operator. So, overall 12 organizations in the region are community based: 1 in Ninotsminda, 3 in Adigeni, and 8 in Akhaltsikhe, all registered in 2001-2002.

Still, CSOs are at very early stage of their development, and do not attract much attention on the part of the local population. Also, the involvement of our respondents in the life of their respective communities is quite low. As many as 90.9% have pointed that since January 2004, i.e. during the last 7 months before the survey, they have not participated in any kind of collective action. Only 3.2% of respondents are members of a voluntary organization, the majority of them - 22 persons - reported involvement as members of parent's committees at schools, 3 were members of a hunters' association. Only 3.9% of the respondents admitted membership in political parties, although slightly more than a half of those surveyed (50.9%) claimed having high or moderate interest in politics.

²⁹ UNDP 2004. There is certain discrepancy with the information from the Akhaltsikhe branch of the Horizonti Foundation, which lists 213 NGOs registered in the region (Akhaltsikhe - 129, Borjomi - 26, Adigeni - 9, Aspindza - 8, Akhalkalaki - 14, and Ninotsminda - 27).

Table 55. Interest in politics across regions

#	District	%
1	Aspindza N=45	60.0
2	Borjomi N=108	57.0
3	Adigeni N=71	54.9
4	Akhaltzikhe N=155	54.2
5	Akhalkalaki N=206	47.2
6	Ninotsminda N=115	40.9

Interestingly, men and women do not differ much in their interest in politics - 50.6% of males and 51.1% of females expressed certain degree of interest in it. Also, no statistically significant difference was found comparing urban and rural respondents.

Respondents appeared to be much more active in private than in public life. As for the participation in social events with kin and acquaintances during the past three months, respondents reported mostly helping others in agricultural works (median number=3), having attended funerals (median=2), weddings (median=2) and received help from others in agricultural work (median=2). It is worth noting that during the past 3 months, 37.7% have not attended any weddings or birthdays, 26.4% have not received any assistance in agricultural or construction work, or in preparing food for a big party, 22.6% have not helped anyone in agricultural or other work, and 13.0% did not even attend funerals, which is rather unusual from the viewpoint of local tradition.

Although not socially very active, 66.5% of respondents have reported taking part in joint action of neighbourhood or town at some time in the past. Much higher number (77.5%), however, have expressed desire to participate in such an activity, if opportunity arises.

Table 56. Participation in community actions across districts

No	District	%
1	Adigeni N=71	97.2
2	Akhaltzikhe N=155	90.9
3	Aspindza N=45	86.7
4	Borjomi N=108	69.4
5	Ninotsminda N=115	40.9
6	Akhalkalaki N=206	14.1

Table 57. Willingness to participate in community actions by males and females across districts %

	Akhaltsi-khe	Adigeni	Aspindza	Borjomi	Akhalkalaki	Ninotsminda
Males	97.4	100	95.5	79.6	62.2	83.9
Females	97.4	100	91.3	87.0	38.9	66.1

It is worth noting that the gender difference is the highest in Akhalkalaki (diff.=23.3%) and Ninotsminda (diff.=17.8%), where women play the least role in community life and where social inhibitions precluding public activism of women are seemingly the strongest, suppressing the willingness to participate in community actions.

Participation in elections hardly points to the high quality of public participation in other areas. While 89.1% of respondents reported participation in presidential and 88.6% in parliamentary elections, the majority of 54.8% thinks that an ordinary person cannot exert

any influence on the actions of the authorities and only 23.7% was sure of having some influence, such perception definitely deters participation.

Respondents were also asked to point to the family members who were engaged in the three social activities: attending a parents' meeting at school, attending a meeting at a local council (*sakrebulo*), and going to a social events such as wedding, birthday, funeral, etc. Very few males attended school meetings, while *sakrebulo* meetings were attended by about three times as many men than women. Men outnumbered women, although to much lesser degree, also in attending social events.



Figure 19. Attendance at public events by males and females (%)

Table 58. Attendance at public events by males and females across districts (%)

	Akhaltzikhe		Adigeni		Aspindza		Borjomi		Akhalkalaki		Ninotsminda	
	M N=243	F N=254	M N=112	F N=133	M N=93	F N=87	M N=174	F N=206	M N=412	F N=494	M N=251	F N=505
School meeting %	8 3.3	64 25.2	2 1.8	42 31.6	21 22.6	18 20.7	5 2.9	49 23.8	12 2.9	86 17.4	19 7.6	49 9.7
Sakrebulo meeting %	116 47.7	49 19.3	56 50.0	10 7.5	30 32.2	14 16.1	36 20.7	37 18.0	141 34.2	45 9.1	64 25.5	12 2.4
Social event %	152 62.5	159 62.6	58 51.8	29 21.8	41 44.1	27 31.0	109 62.6	100 48.5	289 70.1	278 56.3	159 63.3	146 28.9

Gender difference for the attendance of *sakrebulo* meetings was the biggest in Adigeni (dif.=42.2%), Akhalkalaki (dif.=25.1%), and Ninotsminda (dif.=23.1%), and the smallest in Borjomi (dif.=2.7%). However, the attendance of social events is almost equal in Akhaltsikhe and the difference is the biggest in Ninotsminda (diff.=34.4%) and Adigeni (diff.=30.0%).

Next to the belief in possibility to have an impact on decisions of authorities, participation also depends on the trust to institutions and authority figures. Personal ties are considered the most reliable. The church also enjoys high trust, whether among Orthodox, Catholic or Gregorians. Quite high is the trust in the president, which is much higher than the trust felt toward other central and local authorities. Among the TV stations, Imedi enjoys the highest trust, while Channel 1 is the least trusted. The degree of trust toward Rustavi 2, which an year ago was considered as the most trust worthy channel across Georgia, is now quite low. It is worth noting the low trust in courts and toward the regional governor.

Table 59. Rank order of trust in others and institutions

No	Object	%
1	Family members and kin	99.3
2	Friends	87.8
3	Church	86.3
4	Neighbours	80.6
5	President of Georgia	75.4
6	Prime-minister of Georgia (i.e. Zurab Zhvania)	58.3
7	TV station "Imedi"	57.4
8	Government	57.2
9	Local council - sakrebulo	56.0
10	Parliament of Georgia	54.1
11	Local government - gamgeoba	53.9
12	Police	52.0
13	TV station "Rustavi 2"	48.3
14	Court	48.1
15	Regional governor	44.5
16	I channel of State TV	39.6

No significant gender differences regarding the trust profiles have been observed. As for the diversity by districts, their difference is obvious in the case of 12 out of 16 listed objects.

Table 60. Trust in others and institutions across the districts %

	Akhaltzikhe	Adigeni	Aspindza	Borjomi	Akhalkalaki	Ninotsminda
Family members, kin	99.4	100	100	99.1	99.0	99.1
Friends	92.9	98.6	90.7	81.0	88.2	79.1
Church	96.1	95.7	79.1	85.8	75.9	88.7
Neighbours	85.7	98.6	88.4	63.6	83.7	70.4
President of Georgia	94.0	97.1	75.0	73.6	58.6	69.3
Prime-minister	87.6	97.1	31.8	34.0	38.6	62.6
TV station "Imedi"	71.5	98.6	72.7	58.5	42.1	32.4
Government	80.3	95.7	48.8	35.8	36.5	62.6
Sakrebulo	65.8	95.7	46.5	16.8	60.9	50.4
Parliament of Georgia	77.5	95.7	34.9	24.5	36.1	64.3
Gamgeoba	66.2	97.1	34.9	19.0	51.2	54.8
Police	64.5	97.1	38.1	12.1	40.1	71.3
TV station "Rustavi 2"	64.2	98.6	58.5	57.5	20.9	32.4
Court	66.4	97.1	39.5	11.3	31.7	60.0
Gubernatori	78.4	97.1	26.2	3.8	23.4	48.7
I channel of State TV	52.6	98.6	44.2	24.5	15.9	39.5

12. Conclusions and Steps Forward

The intention of this report was to analyse the situation with gender in Samtskhe-Javakheti, focusing mainly on the major issues of gender roles, power, access to information, economic activity, participation, upbringing, values, adherence to norms and attitudes referring to the gender. These dimensions are not isolated or easily distinguishable from each other, but are strongly intertwined and overlapped, with power probably being the most crosscutting issue and the dominant concept.

In order to study these issues, we have used several approaches and targeted different layers of the society. A representative survey of the population has been conducted; focus group discussions were held among the teachers of one school in each district; in each of these schools 8-th grade pupils wrote essays concerning their future; in-depth interviews were taken from representatives of a number of key institutions of regional and district level, while baseline statistical data was collected both in the region and in the capital - Tbilisi. Through such combination of approaches, we aimed on one hand cover the whole of the population and the administration of the region, on the other – to focus on the educational institutions, adolescents and their teachers, as the key elements of change. Our goal was to identify the most burning problems of the region related to gender, to study the attitudes that determine gender-related behaviour, and to measure the extent of the gender disparities in the areas of family life and of social realm, such as power of decision-making and distribution of domestic tasks, economy and labour, public participation, education, and social norms.

The obtained results definitely point to the existence of gender disparities in the region. Significant part of these is observed throughout the country and is linked with the general situation or cultural patterns, and is not unique to the region. The rest is either specific for the whole of Samtskhe-Javakheti, or to the different parts of it. Gender relations are much regulated by the ethnicity, age, culture, ideology, religion, living in urban or rural type of settlement, economic status and education. In this respect the region under study represents a very complex conglomerate with distinct ethnic groups (Armenians, Georgians and in much lesser extent Ossetians, Greeks and Russians), different confessional identities (Orthodox Georgian Church, Apostolic Armenian Church, Catholic church, Moslems), and varying levels of urbanisation and socio-cultural integration into the Georgian society.

During our research, several variables appeared to have importance from the viewpoint of their correlation with differences in attitudes and values:

Gender

Gender itself is a factor correlating with other leading factors. It is clear that gender shapes a number of perceptions and attitudes, which stem from the general differences in values that women and men adhere to. At the same time, the gender differences in attitudes, along with institutionalised differences in the social environment, serve as a basis for many other disparities. Indeed, men and women tend to differ not only in their behaviour, but also in their opinions and attitudes related to gender roles, norms ruling behaviour, or in the assessment of various facts of the social life. Women tend to consider their gender-related roles and duties with less enthusiasm, than men, and would be more eager to increase gender equality. Still, the majority of women would agree with the existing gender differences, and with male dominance in decision-making, therefore perpetuating themselves the discriminative gender roles.

Gender roles have traditionally been construed as a two-dimensional model of masculine and feminine personality traits.³⁰ Women and men are not only different, they maintain as well different viewpoints and the worldview. As it was suggested long ago by Carol Gilligan,³¹ men adhere more to materialistic values while women more to idealistic ones. Females are more concerned with care, relationships, and connections with other people,

³⁰ It is interesting to note that according to anthropological data, until the early 20th century in Georgia, especially in mountain parts of it, in then prevalent extended families there existed male and female heads of the families who were elected by all adult family members. Male heads distributed gender-specific tasks to men, accordingly female heads were responsible for realization of women's household tasks. (Ph. Gogichaishvili. *Handicrafts in Georgia*. Tbilisi 1976)

³¹ Gilligan C., & Attanucci J. *Two moral orientations: Gender differences and similarities*. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 34, 223-237, 1988

while males value independence and achievement more. In family life there is resistance against changing traditional gender roles in family. These roles fit with the functional theory of family describing instrumental and expressive roles taken by males and females³².

Men are more self-confident and optimistic, than woman, First of all, men and women ascribe different importance to different aspects of life, and different things make them happy or disappointed. When respondents in our survey were asked to rate the importance for men and women of the different aspects of life, it appeared that appeared by far more important for men, while religion was more important for women. While men are more concerned with lack of money or scarcity of land, women would worry about their own and their children's health. Boys would talk about their material possessions; girls would discuss more romantic hopes and desires. Courage, independence and determination are considered to be features characterising males; tolerance, restraint, loyalty and moderation are considered to be more female qualities.

Due to the different roles, age too has a differential effect on the social position of women and men. Orientation on career and hence increased expertise over years increases men's resources, while orientation on the care and emotional support does not allow women to accumulate resources and gradually depletes her power.

While the absolute majority of respondents expressed their opinion that men and women should have equal rights in every area of public and private life, men seemed to be more satisfied with the reality, as more women than men strived for equality; respectively, more men than women have stated that men and women are actually equal in Georgia. It is also interesting to observe that while women are themselves frequent victims of domestic violence, they too are more frequent abusers of child's rights, beating them as a punishment.

Gender differences are evident in dealings with domestic and external duties. Household chores have a distinct gender specific character, there are male and female tasks and only a few are done in equal way. Our study has demonstrated the existence of a clear-cut distinction between gender-specific roles, and the overwhelming support for the gender role of male as a provider. Females have much more duties than men at home, creating a double burden for employed women. Men, however, work more days and longer hours than women at their respective jobs. Still, women are more attached than men to their work and more of them consider it as very important.

Geography

It is important to understand what variations exist within the region, making it possible to derive precise geographical and socio-cultural typologies. Across the region the process of socio-economic transition has not been gender neutral. However, the first finding of the study highlights the difficulties in deriving clear geographical typologies, although the correlation with geography is obvious, and all of the districts present quite distinct patterns.

In general, districts of Samtskhe-Javakheti are very different from one-another from the viewpoint of many social characteristics. Still, there is possible to identify three distinct clusters based on pattern of similarities in general socio-cultural characteristics and historic tradition, also revealed through the gender-related attitudes: Akhaltsikhe, Adigeni, Aspindza (Samtskhe); Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda (Javakheti); and Borjomi (Tori).

Javakheti (Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts) is distinguished by the domination of ethnic Armenians (with traditional but rapidly diminishing presence of Russian religious dissidents - Dukhobors) and the strongest socio-cultural isolation from the rest of the country (although themselves also quite different from one another). Indeed, strong ethnic identity, neighbourhood with Armenia, poor knowledge of Georgian language and limited opportunity to learn it³³, coupled with geographic and communicational isolation caused by

³² T. Parsons, R. Bales. *Family, socialization and interaction process*. Glencoe, Ill. 1955

³³ Currently there are more efforts both on the part of the Government and of international organizations such as OSCE to overcome this linguistic deficiency, met by increased motivation on the part of the population to learn the

horrendously poor condition of roads linking to other parts of Georgia resulted in low integration of population, making these districts in many respects distinct from other districts of region as of the whole Georgia as well.

Samtskhe - Akhaltsikhe, Aspindza and Adigeni - is more diverse with regard to representation of ethnic and sub-ethnic groups and religious denominations: Gregorian and Catholic Armenians, Georgians – autochthonous Meskhetians (Catholic and Orthodox) as well as predominantly Orthodox Imeretians and Rachians who along with (Muslim) Ajarans - who were moved in following the deportation in 1944 of the local Muslim population, - comprise the population. Akhaltsikhe district is dominated by the biggest urban, and administrative, centre of the region, with university and other educational institutions, rich museum, and numerous regional administrative and international development agencies, also CSOs; Adigeni is characterised by the most rural community; Aspindza is a poorest district with all the implications of this fact.

Borjomi is much more integrated within the country, situated close to the main State highway. However, in many respects Borjomi district can currently be considered in a worst situation in the region. Bigger proportion of Borjomi inhabitants than of any other districts perceive themselves as poor, despite the fact that their declared monetary income is higher than in other districts. Its agricultural resources are much scarcer than in other districts. While its main resource – recreational capacity and resorts - are increasingly capitalised (mostly in Bakuriani and Borjomi/Likani), still their huge potential is strongly undertapped for income generating, - partly due to occupation of many recreational facilities by IDPs from Abkhazia, but mostly due to insufficient demand on the part of impoverished population of Georgia who cannot afford to go to resorts, or reluctance of foreign tourists to explore possibilities in the country with dubious security record. Criminality is higher here than in other districts of the region, while the rural population makes living through marginal activities such as illegal logging. On the other hand, unlike all other districts of the region it has never been a closed border zone, and due to internationally famous recreational facilities has long experience of cultural diversity and openness. It is well connected with Tbilisi and other parts of the country, and enjoys probably the best urban infrastructure in the region. As a result, the population here seems to be much more advanced regarding gender sphere, as got also reflected in essays of the pupils who showed more individualism and orientation toward gender equality, and more striving for personal independence and career development than the children in other districts.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is another important dimension influencing gender related situation, which in case of Samtskhe-Javakheti is closely related to geography. Ethnic identity has strong influence on the embeddedness of gender stereotypes, as the latter are equated with moral norms characteristic for an ethnic group and perpetuated through identity-preservation mechanisms. The two ethnic groups, Armenians and Georgians constitute the absolute majority of the population of the region, and respective differences between them are important. Religion also place a role within each ethnic group, and there are evident difference between e.g. Catholics, Orthodox, Gregorian or Muslim inhabitants of the region, although these factors are less explored on our study, as ethnicity and geography remain still more important factors, while they also correlate strongly with confessional identity.

Summarily, ethnic Georgian population demonstrated more egalitarian practice with regards to gender. So, the gender gap favouring males is bigger among Armenians in the rate of university education, as well as with the knowledge of languages. There is a difference in the level of personal freedom women enjoy across these two ethnic groups, as free movements of Armenian women are more restricted, they tend less free to go somewhere other than home after the work. However, it is not only ethnicity that influences these spheres, but rather the ethnic profiles or balance of respective communities – so, e.g. ethnic Armenians demonstrate different behavioural patterns in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda where they are demographically dominant, on one hand, and in other parts of Samtskhe-Javakheti on the other.

The analysis of essays written by 8-graders revealed that the writings of girls at Armenian schools (Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda) reflected more subordinate position of women in that area and the tradition of early marriage, preventing girls from following professional development. More girls of Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki schools, than girls from Georgian schools in four other districts, discussed their marriage and future families. At the same time, pupils of Armenian schools were much more exact and concrete in their plans, demonstrating stronger stereotypes, pragmatism and adherence to traditional values, while the Georgian writings were more focused on patriotic feelings and general social problems.

Urbanisation

One of the most important variables strongly correlated with the level of modernism of the worldview, and the attitude toward gender roles in particular, is the degree of urbanisation of a locality. Cross-cultural research indicates that traditional attitude about gender roles are strongest in rural and non-industrialized societies.³⁴ The more urban the environment, the more open to change is the public opinion there, the less traditional and restrictive are gender-related norms.

Our study has confirmed that in more developed urban settings more egalitarian attitude is observed, especially obvious among the youth and the children; while rural communities are more for preferential treatment of males in the sphere of employment, also difference concerning family norms are more obvious in rural areas and they all favor men.

More rural, than urban, dwellers need consent from the family to go out after dark. Both the statistical data and the survey results show higher concentration of people with university education in urban settlements, the also more frequently than people living in rural areas own mobile phones. Also urbanites are more eager to participate in community life. At the same time, paradoxically enough, it appeared that beating of a child is more acceptable for town than the country dwellers.

Not surprisingly, respondents living in the countryside report much less monetary income as compared to urbanites. Differences between the urban and rural settlements, but also between smaller and bigger towns, find their expression in the quality of utilities, and the stability, or existence, of the supplies in electricity, water, sanitation, and piped gas in the first place. Migration process is also more active in rural than in urban areas. Urban economy is in general much stronger monetised and diverse than rural economy based on predominantly subsistence agriculture, while communities are more open and connected with the outer world. Informational openness, social and geographic mobility, availability of social services and career opportunities for women, - weaken discriminative stereotypes and empower women. Civil society is also concentrated mainly in urban areas, with the exception of a few CBOs initiated through the efforts of development agencies.

Impact of Gender on economic behavior

Economic realities and their dynamic are among the most important factors of change in gender relations and norms. They effect the gender relations directly, through creating inequalities and discriminations, but not less significantly, through poverty, disruption of public goods and market mechanisms. Widespread poverty is not just lack of subsistence means at a household level – it is inaccessibility of social services, degraded infrastructure, lack of information. Or, e.g., it is an established fact that although domestic violence occurs in all socio-economic and cultural groups, it is highly correlated with poverty.

Poorly functioning physical infrastructure remains the biggest problem for the region; this affects men and women, old and young, although often women bear more of the brunt. Poor infrastructure, such as power shortages, horrendous condition of local roads, and the deficiency in potable water in almost all localities are perceived as the most urgent problems.

Poverty and unemployment plague the region. They have long-term negative impact on both men and women. Massive closures of industries had direct impact more on male than female employment, increasing male behaviour harmful for health, like excessive drinking

³⁴ See e.g.: Williams J. & Best D. *Cross-cultural views of women and men*. In W. Lonner & R. Malpass (eds.). *Psychology and culture*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1994

and smoking. However, despite the massive changes in male employment, still more men than women manage to find some sources of income. Bigger proportion of men than women get salaries, while more women get pensions. Employed men and women adhere to different work patterns. Men work more days and longer hours than women, and rely more on occasional jobs

Evidence points that female-headed households are more likely to fall into poverty than others, and the gender of the household head is a correlate of income poverty. Female-headed households are systematically more likely to be poor. The disadvantage is particularly pronounced in the case of special groups (elderly women, single parents), more characteristic for urban settlements. Families without adult males are in worse economic situation than average. While male headed households rely more on farming and occasional jobs, female-headed households rely more on pensions and state wages.

The transition has affected the labour market in a number of ways; particularly the sharp increase in unemployment experienced since independence, and the decline in public employment, - therefore the growth of a highly unregulated and informal private market for labour. At the same time, the last decade has seen a sharp decline in the role of the state, with shrinking government budgets and substantial reforms of pension and benefits systems, general contraction of the system of family support. These reforms have affected men and women differently, because of the different roles they play in society and the economy. The sharp real-term reduction of child allowances and other benefits has reduced women's contribution to family income, with important negative consequences for unemployed women's bargaining power within the household. The decreased availability of childcare and other family support services has increased women's 'time poverty' and deter her from joining the labour force.

Economic independence is the key issue related to power. Generally speaking, the more independent is a person economically, the more power he or she can exercise. During focus group discussions participants have pointed that with the increase of women's contribution to the family budget, their power over decisions on family matters would as a rule increase.

Our report highlights institutional and attitudinal prejudices that continue to hamper women's progress into top jobs, as the existing horizontal and more obvious vertical occupational segregation seems to be propagated by firmly-entrenched myths and attitudes about women's ability to perform on a par with male counterparts, and to their presumed lack of commitment to work out of the family.

Unemployment and poverty motivates people to become economic migrants. High migration rates characterizing the region concerns mostly men, but emigrating men would often leave families without an adult male, and even if family integrity is preserved and remittances from abroad help to solve financial problems, the burden on the shoulders of women actually doubles. However, there is also the growing number of women emigrating, mostly illegally, in search of employment, which constitutes a highly vulnerable social group without legal protection.

Impact of Gender on power

Men enjoy more power than women in everyday life, in the community, at home and at work. The normative attitude granting more power to males is supported not only by men, but also by women. The majority of our interlocutors and respondents have expressed their belief that men should have more power in the family, and should earn more than their wives, and that they are more gifted in almost every area. In case of a situation of having only child, preference is given to having a boy, and along the same lines, in a case of necessity to choose between giving education to a boy or a girl, otherwise equally endowed, preference is given to boys.

In case of unemployment, both women and men expressed their desire to work, but declared reasons for not working appeared different among males and females. Men are deterred almost exclusively by the fact that they cannot find work; this reason stands for women as well, but besides it and health difficulties, women named problems more pertaining to the power distribution in the family - lack of time due to household chores, and the fact that other family members would not allow them to work.

Decisions to be made regarding the personal future of an individual - whom to marry, which career to choose and whom to befriend - are more often granted to sons than daughters.

More females than males need agreement for going out of the house after dark and more often such permission is provided by males, and the latter are more free to spend their personal income at their deliberation. The customary laws of inheritance of house and land also give preference to sons over daughters. Probably the norms about sexual behavior most distinctly reflect male power. The majority of our interlocutors would argue that women should preserve virginity until marriage, and that adultery is more acceptable for men than for women.

Violence against women and children is also closely linked to the issue of power. Our study has showed that domestic violence is common in the region. Many point to the instances of husbands abusing their wives, however the physical abuse of children by parents is even more often observed, and it is mostly mothers who are named as responsible for it. More details about the levels of abuse are difficult to obtain, as the prevailing opinion is that family problems should be kept inside the family and domestic violence should not be reported.

Power misbalance is evident in public life as well. Even in the areas of traditional female domination like education and health service, where women employees outnumber men, key managerial positions are predominantly occupied by men. If males constitute just a little more than one fifth of school personnel, about two-thirds of the headmasters of region's schools are men. The similar situation is in health, where the lower the position bigger is the share of women, forming a characteristic pyramid of gender balance - nurses are exclusively women, women prevail among doctors, but males prevail as the heads of hospitals.

Focal Areas for Intervention

Many problems identified in Samtskhe-Javakheti are common with the rest of the country and cannot be solved in isolation. Introducing and establishing equality, decreasing the gender gap requires designing and implementing systematic, long-term interventions, which will not attack existing tradition and be perceived as externally imposed, but will preferably harmonize with local culture. It seems justified to introduce the concept of gender equality as the equality of opportunities and the possibilities of making choice, and in sharing the decision-making power. The end goal is perceived as achieving fairness rather than equality; recognition of needs characterising men and women, both practical and immediate, easily conceived and experienced, as well as structural, more distant and difficult to perceive.

Our report attempted to reveal some aspects of gender relations in Samtskhe-Javakheti that could serve as a basis for public policies aimed at correcting existing drawbacks. In order to develop and implement a gender sensitive agenda, policymakers need however more detailed and reliable information on baseline gender differentials and on the expected social impact of respective policies and reforms. At present, we possess insufficient analytical data and the capacity to fully evaluate the available information on regular basis, and also face difficulties in defining adequate indicators of change, setting effective policy benchmarks, and tracking monitoring priorities. Data collection should be enhanced to reflect the specific needs of gender analysis, of monitoring trends in gender inequalities, and feeding the results into policymaking.

Policy response over the next few years must be tailored to fit the specific circumstances not only of the region but also of the whole country. A strategy for streamlining gender issues, like any other effective strategy, should explicitly and clearly define policy objectives, financial costs, and the practical actions that can and must be undertaken to realise these goals. On the whole, women's concerns remain largely absent from national policymaking agendas, despite ambitious presidential decrees on women's issues and Georgia's ratification of CEDAW. For example, no special temporary measures have been implemented in the fields of employment or politics, despite the government's recognition of the low representation of women and existence of discrimination. There are broad priority areas for intervention needed to underpin the better incorporation of gender into overall development and poverty reduction strategy.

Notwithstanding the declared aim to uproot inequality, little has been accomplished by the government to achieve stated policy objectives, in particular consistent with CEDAW and MDGs. Putting in place 'equal opportunity' legislation is a must within the process of further integration into the European structures and accommodating to the European standards of social policies, and as such demands scrupulous consideration. However, as yet absent is even the clear understanding among policy makers of the concept of gender discrimination as defined by international conventions and its application to Georgian society, and the issue still waits to be fully addressed under Georgian law, while ineffective court system and law enforcement mechanisms impede successful application of existing anti-discrimination legislation. Existing institutional capacities aimed at overseeing and enforcing anti-discrimination laws and protect women's rights, such as the Ombudsman's institute, need to be drastically strengthened, while all branches of government should uphold in practice and in law obligations to guarantee the right to non-discrimination.

These are mutually reinforcing areas for action, and should not be considered in isolation or sequentially. The interventions need to be complex, and apply synergy wherever possible. Public awareness and advocacy campaigns should be coordinated with the changes in legislation and/or policy implementation. Indeed a gender sensitive agenda that does not proceed on all fronts from the outset is unlikely to be fully successful. And success is essential, not only because addressing gender inequalities enhances country's economic prospects, but also because equality of opportunity in all its aspects, among both girls and boys, women and men, is a fundamental prerequisite for the ultimate goal of development - a more fulfilling life for all citizens of the country.

Mainstreaming of gender issues entails the transformation of the development process. It is possible to outline several broad policy areas that require special attention:

- **Strengthening capacity to monitor, analyse and evaluate gender disparities**

The effectiveness of any attempt to reduce gender inequalities, and to effectively incorporate gender analysis in overall development strategies, depends critically on strengthening the data-gathering and analytical capacity on which strategic planning must be based. Indeed, there is an urgent need to cope with the lack and unreliability of gender statistics, and to develop a comprehensive set of easily measurable indicators for each of the stated policy goals.

To be successful, gender-sensitive policies must be specific to the locality of the targeted community. The formulation of context-specific measures should follow the detailed analysis, and should reflect gender-specific needs and interests of men and women. However, in spite of existence of quite a number of gender studies, here is still an insufficient understanding of gender issues in the region, and of what could be relatively successful strategies for dealing with these issues. There is a clear need for in-depth research that may reveal the capitals, capacities and potentials of women, as well as problems and obstacles hindering gender-sensitive development, - to identify the successful approaches and to trace the factors leading to success, studying the role of participation, social capital and networking. Not only conceptual and structural problems related to improving the lives of women and reducing inequalities need to be studied, but different approaches, achievements and malpractices should be analysed in comparative perspective.

Gathering information on the region, as well as the relevant country data, is only the first step. What is needed is building an institutionalised capacity for effective policy analysis, that would target both women and men, in principle questions of existing status quo, and will recognize the existence of gender specific needs and constraints, but also will seek the effective policies to transform the existing gender relations into more equitable ones through the redistribution of resources and responsibilities. Only such analysis will make possible the transition from gender-blind policies to gender-specific policies that take into account gender specific constraints and advantages in order to achieve both equity and effectiveness.

It should be assessed whether the levels of and trends in gender disparities in the region are different from those of other regions; how and why the economic, social and legal contexts and other specific factors create conditions in which these disparities have evolved; and what variations exist within the region, making it possible to derive precise

geographical and socio-cultural typologies and design specific policies. Effective policies mean also more effective allocation of scarce resources, as well as better planning. Any successful social policy should be based on simple and handy criteria for identification of respective beneficiaries. In order to be effective, such identification should be policy-specific, i.e. it should be adapted to the requirements of concrete policies, be it development oriented, aimed at assisting a community or at separate households, or aimed at concrete types of inequalities, and taking into account certain capacities and capitals that a policy should build on.

While there are a few organisations concerned with women's issues, they mostly lack the capacity and motivation to undertake much needed information-gathering and research, while only the State Department of Statistics has capability to deal regularly with respective tasks on the national scale. Supporting capacity building in this area is an urgent task, and might take place most affectively on the base of one of educational institutions, possibly Tbilisi State University, with its cadre of social scientists and solid research tradition. One important option is to introduce standard approach and forms for gathering gender-relevant and gender-disaggregated data, as is already done by the Ministry of Education, into other spheres.

- **Address existing inequalities in access to economic opportunities and mainstream gender in strategies for economic development and poverty reduction**

It is important to recognise the role that discrimination plays in limiting economic opportunities for women and perpetuating poverty. Measurable progress is needed in prohibiting discrimination in the labour force. It is equally important to explicitly recognize that macroeconomic policies and structural reforms, even when formally gender neutral, may in practice have different effects on men and women. In the context of economic transition, this recognition must emphasize the importance of mainstreaming gender sensitive policy-making in the overall strategy for development and poverty reduction.

The process of market liberalization and the privatisation of the economy requires anti-discrimination legislation that should go beyond the basic statements about gender equality found in the existing constitution, and beyond establishing the principle of gender equality in the labour market. What is needed is a mechanism – both customary and statutory, and possibly based on the idea of affirmative action – ensuring the recognition, protection and enforcement of the principle of equal rights to access to resources, such as land and capital. There is a need to amend legislation to prohibit job advertising based on gender and remove gender restrictions on parental benefits, while the state agencies should refrain from all practices that promote gender-specific recruitment. Special effort is needed to establish and strengthen regulatory and enforcement mechanisms that should provide women with protection from labour discrimination in the private sector, and defining procedures for regulating labour relations. Legalisation and regulation of informal employment is a necessary prerequisite for progress in battling existing disparities. Legislation should be developed protecting women against retaliatory dismissal for filing complaints regarding workplace discrimination, and at the same time there is a need for streamlining existing ineffective protective legislation that may impede women's equal employment opportunities.

Special actions are needed to change existing negative stereotypes with regards to professional qualities of women, empower them through more economic independence, by offering women more employment opportunities, and providing training opportunities for their professional development. Specially tailored research should define, what are the main categories of economic activities in which women can be successfully involved, what may be the constraints on effective programmes, and, summing up, what specific actions can be recommended. For instance, opportunities for women to study management could be provided, and there could be earmarked loans, credit associations, business-incubators, and a small credits-issuing system serving small enterprises run or launched by women, or for enterprises with fixed (quota based) gender distribution. At the same time, social infrastructure aimed at reducing the double burden of employed women and providing supportive environment, such as kindergartens, should be opened in order to provide married women a possibility to work or study.

Women frequently are not aware of their rights as well as of opportunities opened to them by international programmes or the national legislation. Lack of competence, necessary in a market economy (skills, knowledge), have been named as significant constraints for achieving economic independence by women. These issues are not unique to women and can also be applied to other groups, but any women-oriented policy should make special stress on dissemination and accessibility of relevant information, as well as on development necessary skills and knowledge, including communicational and computer literacy, linguistic skills (English), and leadership capacity. However, providing information to women is not enough, there is a clear need for, on one hand, increasing motivation to actively seek information, on the other reaching the broader audience of general public through well-designed public awareness campaigns in order to explain gender-related policies and their meaning in the general perspective of development.

- **Promote public awareness around gender and incorporate gender-sensitivity into the educational system**

Until now the state has failed to modify the social and cultural patterns that promote gender inequality and in some cases reinforce cultural stereotypes. Gender stereotypes remain entrenched throughout the society, particularly in rural areas. A significant portion of the population demonstrates little understanding of the concept of gender equality, and even reveals intolerance towards the respective notion. Officials at relatively high levels of the district, regional, and national governments, fall short of publicly condemning gender discrimination, justifying the need to organise anti-discrimination training programmes for officials at all levels.

The positive change in gender differentiation, like in many other fields may occur only in case of changing the existing culture of obsolete inter-gender stereotypes. This is a long process and can be realized through the emergence and realisation of the need to change, transforming gender-associated norms, establishing the framework for the actualisation of the new fairer gender norms, and channelling the socialization process in that direction. However the key to progress lies in effective public awareness campaigns and advocacy work through media, as well as streamlining the process through which formal and informal education deals with gender. The goal is to achieve awareness and understanding that gender roles are socially created and therefore can be changed to promote equality. Such awareness, or "conscientisation", brings understanding of the development process in the perspective of structural inequality, through which women and men realize that their problems do not derive so much from personal inadequacies, but are rooted in a social system of institutionalised discrimination.

During numerous discussions with people in Samtskhe-Javakheti, it became evident that the existence of gender inequality is not easily recognized, or when it is, there is a huge gap between the assessment of the situation in public and in private areas. Almost everyone commonly would express support for equality in public life, but would oppose equality in private and family life, thus trying to formulate separate norms for the family domain and the society at large. Gender equality in private sphere is often perceived as a threat to traditional family values, and hence dangerous.

All media – electronic and printed, in addition to other forms of public awareness campaign, should be applied in mindful and balanced manner for achieving both awareness and realistic expectations. It is necessary for actors to maintain close contact with communities, explaining policies and looking for feedback, at the same time involving NGOs, CBOs, and other groups of gender-focused organisations in various councils, committees and structures that are participating in designing policies and monitoring their implementation.

Low accessibility to information is linked among other things also with public health. Apart of poverty deterring people from seeking professional assistance at early stages of illnesses, lack of information on prophylaxis, healthy life and early detection of diseases, ignorance regarding family planning and reproduction health is strongly affecting the health status of the population.

As information flows gain more and more importance, penetrating almost every sphere of human activity, inaccessibility of information can be in many cases considered as an instrument of oppression or segregation. Access to information is in its turn to considerable extent determined by education. Gender gap in education is not very explicit in the region

as a whole, although in regard to having university education men clearly outnumber women. Still, it is widely believed that education more important for men than women. As university education is becoming more and more expensive, the expected preference of giving such education to sons rather than daughters could dramatically increase the gap, and special measures and incentives should be considered for maintaining gender balance.

Education is the key factor in changing the gender stereotypes. The younger generation is more susceptible to respective change; Therefore school education represents a window of opportunity for modernizing a society. Notably, the importance and the need for the availability of quality education, the necessity of more demanding and effective learning at schools were underlined by pupils in all the districts, speaks of it as one of the most urgent tasks.

The educational system, and especially the school system, needs to adapt to the concepts of gender equality. Outdated textbooks, which contain harmful gender stereotypes, should be replaced or edited. The system needs to incorporate information about reproductive health as well as basics of sexual education as a part of the standard curriculum, but special tact is needed not to cause a counterproductive backlash because a heightened sensitivity of this issue in the region.

Specialised information campaigns for parents should provide them with professional advice on the issues of parenting and child development, but also on gender-sensitive issues. Schools although should do more to involve parents in the educational process, and debate gender stereotypes with both parents (particularly involving fathers) and children. At the same time special efforts are needed to overcome excessive domination of women among teachers, as certain gender balance among pedagogical personnel (and on the recently introduced school boards) is a necessary prerequisite for providing healthy social environment to schoolchildren.

Low participation of men in upbringing of their children is a serious problem facing the region. Fathers rarely spend much time with their children, they do not show how to do things, do not attend school meetings, and do not help children with homework. In many families migrant fathers are in the best case absent from the families for 10 months per year. In fact children do not have male role models next to them, so for boys to learn the role of men and for girls to learn the interaction with men is inaccessible. The situation is troublesome not only for children but for the fathers as well, who are devoid of the pleasure of relationship for the first place. Besides it is accepted fact that not only parents socialize children, but also children contribute to the development and changes in parents, which fathers cannot fully enjoy due to the lack of contact with children.

A possible negative development could be the decreased accessibility of university education for rural population, further disadvantaging girls. The access to universities from 2005 is determined by scores on the standard National Test System, implying tests in foreign language competency, which may become a serious problem for the pupils at small rural schools where languages are mostly poorly taught.

One more important issue is to ensure that disabled children, boys and girls equally, acquire access to the educational process, as today, particularly in rural areas, they have virtually no access to education. In general, girls and women in rural areas have limited access to higher and continuing education, which requires urgent action. Along the same lines, action is needed to help pre-adolescent girls in early marriage or pregnancy (particularly a problem in Akhalkalaki), who are often removed from school due to 'moral' considerations, receive schooling and opportunity for future education.

- **Enhance public participation, empowerment and self-realisation**

Representatives of both genders must be involved in the decisions affecting their lives, and apart from moral dimension, this is considered crucial for ensuring appropriateness and effectiveness of any gender-sensitive policy. Processes and structures for involving particularly women in decision-making should be supported and should be transparent. Indeed, women are fully entitled to be involved in the process of decision-making with regards to the issues that fundamentally concern them – those of their well-being in the first place. Civil participation is based on public awareness, on the motivation to get

engaged, on existence of skills for democratic participation, and of democratic mechanisms for participation, whether confrontational or cooperative. Public awareness has two aspects – the awareness on the part of women of their rights and options available, as well as procedures and means for protecting their rights; and the knowledge about the policies that are related to their well being, current and future.

There are legislative and material prerequisites that must be in place for women to take part in public life. The key factor is whether there are institutional structures and linkages to ensure that specific interests of women are represented in local councils or other social institutions. Traditional gender roles limit women's equality in many spheres, despite their equal legal status with men. Traditional values are considered far more important, than those associated with the law, and human and individual rights. The lack of consciousness among women themselves concerning gender discrimination, coupled with the absence of a strong legal culture, limit the use of the legal system and codified rights as a tool for promoting women's rights.

The need for participation is high both among men and women, which creates venue for the increase of involvement of citizens in the public life. Currently, there is restricted space that people, and particularly women in rural areas, can use for societal activities. The ultimate goal of an approach aimed at empowerment and enhancing participation is to create equitable and sustainable development with women and men as decision-makers through enabling these groups to create social transformation with a gender perspective, and is essentially concerned with women's participation and empowerment to address the issues of gender inequality. Supporting and capacity building of women's NGOs is one of the most effective tools for achieving this, but it needs to be accompanied but public awareness campaigns and educational work.

As Robert Putnam has demonstrated in his seminal work³⁵, experience in any kind of societal activity provokes participation, while the degree of democratisation in its turn depends on the breadth of such participation. Therefore women's clubs, where they will be able to meet and do something together, be it fitness, singing, sewing or some art is to be encouraged. It is also recommended to create similar clubs for men focused on sports, arts or craftsmanship.

The activation of relationships within local communities in order to deal with problems that affect their everyday lives, a central theme of community mobilisation, should also be exploited. This entails many principles such as encouragement of social interaction, leadership development, and new human and institutional relationships.

The youth deserve special attention, both due to their heightened vulnerability and their importance for the future. Currently, there are many developments that have impact on the role of the young people and hence on their social standing. Lack of employment possibilities, lack of facilities to spend leisure are the main problems that the youth face. Therefore, the fundamental problem of the youth, and young women especially, is lack of opportunities for personal development and self-realisation. However, existence of opportunities in only one side of the coin. Even more important is awareness about career or educational options, and the motivation to pursue them. Essays written by pupils within our study has revealed the general uncertainty related to the future careers of the youth. This indicates that programmes of career planning for schoolchildren are urgently needed.

The perception of well-being and satisfaction with life found among our respondents was low. The majority of our respondents, particularly men, has not gone for vacations or rest during the past three years, and are not engaged in any collective hobbies, do not go for sports. In fact, everyone would complain that there is nothing to do for young people, no sports or youth clubs, no cinema in most locations. As a result, the only "meaningful" leisure activity becomes drinking beverages or standing in the streets. Many, especially the youth, perceive lack of entertainment opportunities as a serious problem making life dull and uninteresting.

Opportunities should be created to build on the dynamism, skills and knowledge that are more easily acquired at the young age, be it new technologies, foreign languages or computer-related competences. Young people more easily go abroad, to study or to work, they can easily pursue a successful career in business, politics or in public service. However,

³⁵Putnam, R. (1993). *Making Democracy Work*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press

if there are no well targeted and planned interventions, many young people may find difficult to evade the risks of unemployment, poor health, depression, functional illiteracy, delinquency, drugs and poverty. In the first place, leisure opportunities for youth should be organized. This can be internet clubs, sports groups, music and dancing activities, or any other opportunities for meaningful activities. So, for example, Javakheti plateau (Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki) provides excellent opportunities for cross-country skiing and speed skating, but are not realised due to the lack of necessary sports equipment.

Reliance on the web-based information is rapidly increasing. As a result of the implementation of the UN project of computerization the region, the problem of computer literacy as well as knowledge of English gains importance. If there is certain opportunity to use computers at educational institutions, and some organizations provide the courses for children, the adult population is devoid of possibility to learn either computer skills or English. Opening such courses for adults, men and women alike, would be a relatively easy and effective way to have impact, and a good example of a cost-effective intervention. The skills acquired will also improve the chances for future employment.

- **Promote health, with special attention toward gender-specific and reproductive health issues**

Health is another key factor of modernisation, and should be adjusted to different health needs of men and women. While it is evident that higher raise in mortality and morbidity rate for men indicate the increased stressogenic factors having stronger influence on males, it is not only the failure in healthcare system responsible for these differences but the general socio-economic setting and other external factors. However, the risks for maternal mortality and the limited resources for meeting specific healthcare needs of women are more direct consequences of the ineffective healthcare system, as well as insufficient effort applied to health education. For instance, abortion remains the prevailing form of birth control, and this issue can be countered only through raising awareness about reproductive health and family planning methods.

Health care facilities in their turn are often inadequate and poorly equipped in the region, and the high cost of services and remoteness of the location of the best facilities make them inaccessible for most people. Therefore, quality healthcare is largely inaccessible to those who cannot afford to pay private doctors' fees or go to the capital or abroad, and particularly for those living in rural or remote areas.

Health-related issues should stay in the focus of attention of the agencies concerned with region. Effects of malnutrition, poor sanitation and drinking water quality too can be dramatic in regard of the development of young generation and hence are to be attended. There are several ways of tapping these problems, starting from dissemination of relevant information about disease prevention and healthy lifestyle and nutrition, to providing areas in particularly difficult conditions with basic medical support and communicational means to call emergency in case of need. Especially important is to carry out prophylactic measures against contagious infections such as TB, as if it spreads, treatment may appear extremely difficult and expensive and to create first the need, and then find ways for improving sanitation.

Besides the poverty that hinders people from seeking professional assistance at early stages of illnesses, lack of information on early detection of the symptoms of illnesses, low knowledge about family planning and reproduction health needs deters the sick from seeking assistance.

Information on health, healthy life-style and available health services can play an important role in decrease of morbidity. As women are more concerned with the health of the family, focus should be on finding ways for the provision of health information to women. This can be done through the leaflets, medical personnel meetings with the community, and media. Low accessibility to information is directly linked with poor health.

There are two important issues that seem worth to be considered in addition – one is related to proceeding with effective medical insurance policies that will be backed and respective services guaranteed. The second approach involves movable medical brigades with portable equipment that should regularly visit respective areas and provide competent medical advice or treatment.

Often, the population knows little about available services or targeted programmes. Even before first steps are made in launching concrete health related policies such as immunization, an active public debate and public awareness campaign should be carried out in order to inform the population about the problem, and about the objectives and procedures within such programmes. The campaign should use all available means – electronic and printed media, publications and meetings, and take into account favourable timing in order to achieve its goals.

- **Deal with gender-related domestic violence and violence against children**

Gender-related violence requires special attention and pro-active action. The region of Samtskhe-Javakheti is known for relatively better criminal situation as compared to other regions of Georgia, but there is need to get prepared for the risks of increased gender-based violence as traditional ways change and the vacuum of authority, as well as more openness to the world along with benefits may bring new threats. In general, there is a conspicuous lack of information on gender-based violence, as well as specific legislation addressing the issue.

Particular attention is also needed to prevention measures in the area in case of growing human trafficking. These need to be addressed through the focus on raising awareness, improving pro-active measures, and strengthening the law and its enforcement in these areas, both on regional and national levels. In particular it is important to mainstream concerns about trafficking, domestic violence and crime in government and public administration. New laws are needed to prevent abuse of victims, especially victims of trafficking, along with institutional reforms in relevant public entities, including justice and customs. Specific policies should be designed for the treatment and re-socialisation of young offenders. Victims of trafficking need to be included as target groups in current AIDS programs and projects.

However, it is the picture of widespread domestic violence that is a matter of grave concern. Domestic violence remains a hidden phenomenon, with the majority of the population denying its existence. Currently, no domestic violence legislation explicitly protects women from abuse by family members, such as their husbands, while marital rape is not even recognized by general public, as well as by the Georgian legislation, as a crime. Respective legislation needs urgently to be developed, and enforced.

Creating crisis centres for women seems to be an effective measure, as relatively successful experience of operating such facilities already exists in the country. The centres could be opened in the bigger towns of Borjomi, Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki, where more anonymity of victims and higher effectiveness of action can be achieved, through social-psychological rehabilitation of victims, offering them legal and other advice, and when needed providing them with temporary shelter and legal or psychological advice.

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